The Complete FOLK HERBAL

An Illustrated Guide to Natural Remedies and Everyday Healing

REBECCA BEYER

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SIMON ELEMENT

New York | Amsterdam/Antwerp | London | Toronto | Sydney/Melbourne | New Delhi

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PREFACE

What This Book Is About

We are in a new herbal age—a time of renewed collective awareness of the power of the plant kingdom. It is not so much a return to the old; rather, it is a unique time, when the wisdom of the ancients is being combined with the power of the scientific method to birth our modern herbal practice. It is a system of thought and inquiry that grows and changes with new discoveries, with expanded oral lore, and with the folk-skill of sharing information through hands-on experience. It is a continuation of an old art that has grown greater with the people who practice it.

While herbalism has never died out completely, the number of people who have easy access to the knowledge of plants has been decreasing since the industrial revolution. This has been further augmented by the rise of physician and medical schooling, with its many legal requirements. Evidence-based training and ethical medical practices are paramount for practicing any sort of healing art; however, this limited approach has resulted in the systematic destruction of the wisdom of herbalists of the past, especially people of the global majority, or queer and women healers who were often excluded from medical schooling. This is a deep wound in our collective medical history.

Although some places in the world have retained and normalized the use of plants for healing, as well as preserved methods and modes of sharing that knowledge, today that is a rare practice. While Western medicine is essential for overall good health, practicing herbalism allows individuals to care for simple medical issues that most people face, ranging from head colds to cold sores, with safe practices drawn from the knowledge of plants. Additionally, many of us live without access to regular, affordable healthcare in the United States, so finding

ways to maintain our health ourselves when possible is empowering and often necessary.

Since I began my herbal learning journey in 2007, I have been delighted to see more and more people express interest in herbalism and foraging. I've noticed these were not just my crunchy friends and comrades; they were also people from diverse classes and political backgrounds. What brings us to the plants is deeply personal and it varies from person to person, but overwhelmingly, it's the call of safe and effective medicines growing in abundance just outside our door that is so compelling for many of us. We reject the idea that foraging is an environmentally harmful thing only poor folks do, and we challenge the classism that has married wealth to use of the land. Collectively, we notice the growing shift toward seeing plant medicines as desirable; people have begun to view plants as a part of healthy living again.

I did not grow up with plant medicine and I did not know how to identify useful plants. Instead, I relied on teachers and books to grow my knowledge and to safely enter the complex and incredible world of plant medicines. I hope, in an age when it can be difficult to figure out what information is good and what is harmful, this book can offer useful knowledge in one place for your reference when you need it. I also suggest you seek out other sources, other opinions; remember, I am just one person, and while I have years of passionate study under my belt, looking to a collective of responsible teachers is the best way to learn and grow in your own practice. My way is not the sole highway, and you certainly have no lack of choice in the herbal world. But allow my voice to be one of many voices in your practice.

This book is for you if you take this journey with me. It is a repository of favorite tidbits and practical know-how that will help you make medicine and use it effectively. I offer my understanding of the simplest ways to help you feel confident and calm when working with herbs. You will feel welcomed and comfortable with these recipes to make medicines with the plants that grow near and around you. Remember, folk medicine is the medicine of the people. It is a way of the word and the hand. Today, when many of us don't have a granny or an elder to teach us this magic, I hope this book will guide you along your walk ever forward on the Green Path.

SCOPE OF PRACTICE

There is an important notion we must hold in mind as we learn and grow: the scope of practice. This means we do not attempt to treat conditions for which we are not qualified, experienced, or confident in treating. All the information I provide here is not intended to treat ailments, as I am not a doctor. Instead, I am someone passionately interested in the intersection of the history of plant medicine and safe, easy, and effective herbal care for today. Please always use caution when trying new herbs.

In general, acquiring information and being humble in our herbal knowledge is of utmost importance. Many people are on medications that can interact with herbs; they also have underlying health conditions that make safe recommendations of herbal medicine more difficult. Always check for drug-herb interactions and consult qualified medical practitioners before beginning any herbal regimen.

This book is not intended to help you diagnose or treat persons suffering from illness alone. Rather, it is a guide to help you work in conjunction with in-person classes, other books, and hands-on lessons from experienced herbalists, all in the hope you'll commit to this study of herbs. The book is intended to inspire you to learn more about simple health matters, but it is my hope it will also encourage intermediate and advanced practitioners to go deeper into their understanding of the total contribution of certain herbs.

I cannot walk beside you on your journey with herbalism. But know that I am with you, and that I thank you for caring about the plants, their histories, and the peoples who collectively have allowed us to learn this incredible information.

THE HISTORY OF WESTERN HERBALISM

Understanding the legacy of a practice is important before taking it up as our own. Know that Western herbalism is built upon the backs of our collective ancestors, and some of those peoples did not willingly bend to carry the heavy load. That history is rife with pain, and unfortunately, this is often overlooked or, worse, rewritten to make things seem easier and more comfortable. Yet understanding the real history of herbal medicine has not taken away from my practice, my feeling of belonging in the plant world, or my dedication to the plants and people who carried this knowledge I have benefited from. Instead, it helps me feel *more* connected, *more* understanding, and *more* grateful to be able to work with plant medicines from all over the world.

While herbal histories are unique to different regions of the globe, I live in North America, where much of our herbal knowledge comes from peoples who have been historically killed or enslaved, and have had their history rewritten to cover the deep and lasting wounds inflicted upon them. It's not only important to acknowledge this history, but also to question who has written that history and why. For our work, it is necessary to acknowledge the source of this information and folklore so as to ensure we address cultural appropriation that has excluded and erased Black, Brown, and Indigenous contributions.

I say this not to berate or punish white people but to call us to action and to ensure all people have access to the true history of how we have come to know what we know. It's a reminder that when we use sassafras or tulsi, or any other plant with a sacred spiritual background, we remember to contemplate the ways in which we support and promote those cultures whose knowledge we are benefiting from. Have we bought herbs from them? Bought their books?

Donated money to their causes if we are able? Some of my favorite ways to show this support are making donations, teaching free classes for BIPOC folks who want them, and learning about my own ancestors and their medicines. We live in a globalized world, and there is much beauty in consensual cultural sharing. In the history of herbal medicine, that has not been the norm, but we can make it so today with careful consideration, patience, and humility, remembering that we are always learning.

Humans have practiced herbalism since prehistory. Archaeological sites today allow us to learn which plants were important to early humans; these ancient peoples even left written records describing which plants they used. The first recorded mention of an herbal remedy we know of dates to more than 5,000 years ago. Clay tablets found in ancient Mesopotamia describe a dozen herbal recipes by the Sumerians, calling for the use of more than an astonishing 250 plant species.[1]

While Western herbalism is often considered a European story, it is much more diverse when we look at ancient history. People in Egypt, India, and China all collected, wrote, and disseminated texts on medicine and herbs dating as far back as 400 BCE. They birthed some of the longest and most well-studied plant-medicine traditions—namely, Ayurveda and traditional Chinese medicine. These early systems directly influenced and inspired the origins of herbal medicine in ancient Greece and Rome. Hippocrates, often called the father of modern medicine, was one of the first in his writings to separate illness from spiritual causes, around 400 BCE. At the time, it was controversial to dismiss the belief that angry spirits and gods could cause illness, seemingly tempting the Fates themselves into dealing untimely blows.[2] The way Hippocrates expressed his ideas of herbal actions upon the human body ultimately made way for writings about herbs for illness that went beyond spells or spiritual cures and laid the foundation for the early medical sciences.

The first medical school in Europe was in Salerno, Italy, established in the tenth century CE. But it was through a rich history of Islamic medical texts and their translations from Arabic to Latin that North African medicine made its way into the very foundation of this practice. Greek medical texts from Hippocrates and another Greek, Galen of Pergamum, were also translated at this

school and integrated into the institution's operations. This school was unique in many aspects, particularly because it supported practitioners of all genders in a time when women were not encouraged to pursue professions. One of the most famous of these women was Trota of Salerno, who wrote some of the most influential texts on women's medicine in the Middle Ages.[3]

Monasteries through the years also contributed to the recording of plant knowledge through their libraries and translations of earlier works. It was not until the fifteenth century that invention of the printing press made the painstaking labor of hand copying those herbals a thing of the past. Though literacy was still a privilege of the clergy and upper classes, an increasing number of books about the uses of plants were circulating and that helped begin the slow process of information crossing the traditional class barriers. Also, translating those works to the languages spoken by common folk instead of Greek and Latin also allowed for the spread of plant medicine, making its way into the hands of diverse classes of people in Europe.

One of the most well-known and cited English-speaking herbalists of the Western herbal tradition is the English physician Nicholas Culpeper. He wrote about the seventeenth-century countryside and printed his English-language texts on herbal remedies and astrological medicine. Culpeper treated people for small fees, or even at no cost, and he sold his works for affordable prices, believing this type of healing should not be reserved for the upper class. This goal earned him two accusations of witchcraft, as well as a close call with a prohibition from practicing medicine, owing to the stranglehold the College of Physicians kept on medical knowledge.[4]

Culpeper is important not only for his anarchic heart but also for the way his work influenced herbalism in the American colonies. His book, *The English Physician* (now known most often as "Culpeper's Herbal"), was printed in Boston in 1708, the first medical text available and the first book on herbalism in North America. Ultimately, the ethnobotany of First Nations people in North America was blended with the knowledge systems that European colonists had brought with them to America, and the knowledge of enslaved African peoples to form the Western herbal and American folk herbal traditions we know today. Some of this information was mingled by choice, but much of it was brought

together by force through the bonds of slavery and colonization. There is so much more to say about this long and complex history, but the point here is that Western herbalism has varied origins, influenced as it has been by so much more than Western European thought and practice.

Indeed, Western herbalism is a true blend of cultures and histories, beliefs, religions, and folkways, beginning in prehistory and continuing to this day. So, as you work with plants, honor where the medicine has come from, acknowledge the culture and its living people. Remember that we all have a legacy of herbalists in our ancestral pasts, though we carry different historic burdens and have received different blessings. It is my hope that our hearts grow more open and understanding, and our empathy becomes stronger and more fully realized. It is my hope we can work together for the collective liberation of all peoples to have access to their traditional medicine.

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1 J. Nunn, *Ancient Egyptian Medicine* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 113:57–68.

2 P. C. Grammaticos and A. Diamantis, "Useful Known and Unknown Views of the Father of Modern Medicine: Hippocrates and His Teacher Democritus," *Hellenic Journal of Nuclear Medicine* 11, no. 1 (2008): 2–4.

3 Paul Oskar Kristeller, "The School of Salerno: Its Development and Its Contribution to the History of Learning," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 17, no. 2 (1945): 138–94.

4 B. Woolley, *Heal Thyself: Nicholas Culpeper and the Seventeenth-Century Struggle to Bring Medicine to the People* (HarperCollins, 2004), 40.

ETHICAL WILD HARVESTING

Today in our modern Western world, very few people make foraging a large part of their life. This is interesting to note, as one of the most common questions people ask about foraging is: Why do it if it is unsustainable for everyone to do it? They then ask: Isn't it hurting nature to forage? Don't the animals need the plants for food? Why not just go to the grocery store? These questions have an underlying assumption that human interactions with nature are *inherently destructive*.

Wild food foraging, and the harvest of wild plants for food and medicine, has been under fire since the early 1990s, owing to a variety of factors. Unfortunately, the roots of humankind's disconnect to nature run so deep that it is particularly difficult for scientists to see the ways in which human activity in nature, when properly managed, is not ipso facto destructive. Just as the U.S. Forest Service manages the access that hikers have to the woods and how the public can enjoy them, wild foraging can be—and in some places already is—heavily regulated. By sharing accessible information about the proper harvesting techniques for each plant, shrub, and tree in question in a locale, we can provide tools to avoid improper harvest or the overharvesting of rare or culturally significant species.

It's difficult not to see the world in simple binaries. Some of the key things about the sustainability of foraging wild plants is that this foraging is not being promoted as an activity all people would, can, or should want to do. *It does not have to sustain the whole populace to be a sustainable activity*.

To practice safe, respectful, and meaningful foraging from the wild, you must follow nuanced, place-specific rules and constantly ask questions. You also have to be willing to learn new things constantly and not practice binary thinking in the face of an ever-evolving and deepening practice. These recommendations are all part of the reconnection process, ensuring you are in a good relationship with the wild world.

There's a lot to consider before picking a plant, but over time you'll learn how to determine whether a plant can be harvested and how much harvesting is normal. In that same measure, I lament the gatekeeping concerning herbalism and foraging that

keeps many people, especially BIPOC individuals, from feeling comfortable and welcome working with plants. We are *all* needed with our unique gifts in these hard times, and it is important to acknowledge where we are also in need of growth.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF WILD HARVESTING

There are some basic things you must acknowledge before you begin foraging for herbs. First, always ensure you have 100 percent identification of any plant or mushroom before ingesting it. No matter how advanced your knowledge, you should ask another person—not Google or a book—to confirm. Or, if you cannot do this in person, send good, detailed pictures with the location and date found to a university or online reputable plant expert. As you learn to ID the plants, you'll find having multiple points of identification is key to success. Note the season, the stage of growth, physical characteristics, any smell, and relationships to nearby plants. At the end of the day, it's up to each of us to be responsible for seeking confirmation of any identification.

Second, don't forage in places of contamination. Roadsides and residential areas can be contaminated with lead and industrial waste. Make sure you check the history of an area before harvesting any plants.

Third, don't forage on people's private property without their permission. Also, be aware of local regulations concerning foraging on public lands; you could be fined if you are caught in an area where foraging is illegal.

Fourth, focus on harvesting abundant plants. Read about the plant populations in your area. In harvesting invasive plants, you'll find the native flora will greatly benefit from those efforts.

Finally, educate yourself on culturally significant plants and be sensitive to plants sacred to the First Nations. One example of this is white sage (*Salvia apiana*), which has been overharvested owing to increased interest from people outside its Indigenous cultural uses in North America.

Ask Yourself the Following Questions

- **Are you able to honestly view your potential impact on a stand of plants and/or the ecosystem in which it lives? If you see that there is not enough growth, can you walk away from the plants truly and wisely?**
- **How much medicine do you realistically need? We often harvest more than we use; avoid killing a plant just to waste it.**
- **If the plant is rare, can you use a more widely available plant in its place?**
- **Is this stand of plants healthy? Is there observable damage to the plants?**
- **How large is the stand? Are there others nearby?**
- **If your harvest won't require taking the plant's life, how long will it take the harvested part(s) to grow back? If your harvest does take the plant's life (such as in the harvest of roots), how will you support its propagation in the future?**
- **Will your impact be noticeable? Have the plants been trampled or hurt? How can you maintain this space beautifully?**
- **Is there evidence of others having harvested here? How intense is that evidence?**

These answers require an ever-deepening knowledge of your specific location's history, current management practices, and much more. This can make harvesting on public lands—which is often illegal or heavily regulated—very hard, but if you have permission to harvest on private lands, you can ask the landowner about the land use history.

YOUR FORAGING RECORDS

A great way to manage and add to this information is by keeping a foraging binder. You could also use Google Drive or a phone app. The point is to have a separate entry for each new plant and tree, thereby expanding and adding to your knowledge over time. This recordkeeping will both act as your personal knowledge repertoire and let you monitor spots you harvest each year.

Here is an example page to give you an idea, though you may want to modify it to suit your situation as you start collecting your own notes. Add any additional categories that will help you track each plant's population density and health over time.

PLANT COMMON NAME:

SCIENTIFIC NAME:
FAMILY:
LOCATION:
DATE:
OBSERVATIONS OF SURROUNDINGS: (Make note of the overall population, how the plants look. What is it like in the general area? Is there new construction nearby? Does it look like someone else has been foraging here?)
GENERAL POPULATION: (Note whether there have been any changes since you were there last.)
AMOUNT HARVESTED:
PLANT PART HARVESTED: (roots, leaves, flowers, etc.)
OTHER NOTES:

SOME GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR HARVESTING

As you venture out and harvest plants for making medicine, keep in mind these points:

- **Know the rare and endangered plants of the area and *don't* harvest them.**
- **Know the poisonous plants that pose dangers (like poison ivy [*Toxicodendron* spp.]) before harvesting in a new region.**
- **Pick from different stands or spots in a stand to minimize your impact.**
- **Care for and develop a relationship with the stand. Educate yourself on that plant's propagation and help the plants by either replanting root divisions or spreading seeds.**
- **Don't harvest the oldest and largest plants in a stand; they are the most successful survivors with the strongest genes.**

- Leave any area you harvest from in the same or better condition than you found it. Fill in any holes after harvesting roots. Don't leave discarded leaves or other plant parts lying around where others can see them. Whenever appropriate, replant root crowns or scatter seeds. Pick up trash and help maintain the area.
- Keep notes on different wildcrafting populations in your foraging binder or other notebook. Observe the stand over time so that you can continue to refine your personal assessments of where it is safe and ethical to harvest from that spot each year.
- Remember, every flower you pick is a fruit that never shall be. Instead, grab flowers from branches that fall in springtime storms. They can also be preserved in thin layers of salt and added to rice as a beautiful edible, as the Japanese do with their cherry blossoms in spring.

HOW MUCH CAN I TAKE?

If you google "foraging," you'll come across many different numbers, proportions, and percentages of what is appropriate to harvest from any given patch of wild plants. These types of judgments are not helpful, for a few reasons. First, the percentages refer to foraging generally and use a one-size-fits-all approach. In certain ecosystems, like desert highlands where water is limited and plants grow more sporadically, taking any amount from a population can be devastating. Yet harvesting plants in temperate areas with high rainfall and more plant diversity, especially non-natives and invasives, can be helpful.

Second, we can help control invasive plants like Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*) in the United States by eating the plants and making medicine with them. There's no rule about how much to take that does not depend completely on the location, population size, species, and climate. Instead, learn about each new plant in your region and how prevalent it is on a case-by-case basis, always asking questions and watching the populations grow and change over time.

WHAT ABOUT HARVESTING INVASIVE PLANTS?

Invasive plants are defined by the USDA as "a species that is non-native (or alien) to the ecosystem under consideration; and, whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health." Invasive plants are taken seriously by many speaking about environmentalism and conservation. Foraging and then eating, or making herbal products with invasive

plants as a means of controlling their population has raised much criticism, most likely from a lack of nuanced thinking.

Using a plant as a means to help curb its population growth can be a great part of a multistep approach to controlling the otherwise unchecked spread of these plants, which can affect native plant and animal populations. However, the critics of this view fear that the products made from these invasive plants will become culturally significant, and therefore become a protected resource by the populace—in other words, they are concerned about the creation of a market demand for the invader. But this argument concerns a wider market and harvesting on a grander scale than what we're dealing with here.

WHERE CAN I HARVEST LEGALLY?

If you're unclear about where you can legally forage, your favorite hunter-friend, relative, or online community of foragers or other regional groups can be a great resource for learning about public lands open for foraging and hunting. These people may even know private property owners from whom you can seek permission to harvest the plants. On that note: Be aware of the hunting season for the area and take proper caution during that time of the year.

Finally, if you are lucky enough to have land, consider hosting classes or walks with local herbalists, or allowing folks to forage on "unused" areas of your property. That especially includes members of Indigenous and other BIPOC groups in your local area. Not only will you gain a chance to learn more about the magic of your bio region, but you can also share your abundance in an impactful way. Remember, it is often unsafe for BIPOC persons to hike and explore in certain areas, owing to systemic racism, so doing our part to help create and maintain safe wild spaces is paramount for our collective health and liberation.

CAN I HARVEST RARE PLANTS?

There are many herbalists and ecologists who believe that writing about rare and endangered plants like goldenseal and ginseng is unwise. With our current catastrophic climate crisis, including the destruction of habitat, wild lands, and

loss of plant diversity, this mindset is not unfounded. There is a collective fear that if more people know about these plants, they will want to harvest them, even if warned about their scarcity. Our capitalist economy is good at creating products out of something living and finite; it's an appetite that has no end. I do not disagree with this philosophy entirely, but I do believe that people will make good choices when given the right information. Thus, it is important as a conservation technique to educate people on how to identify rare plants, which can inspire their protection and avoid accidental harvest.

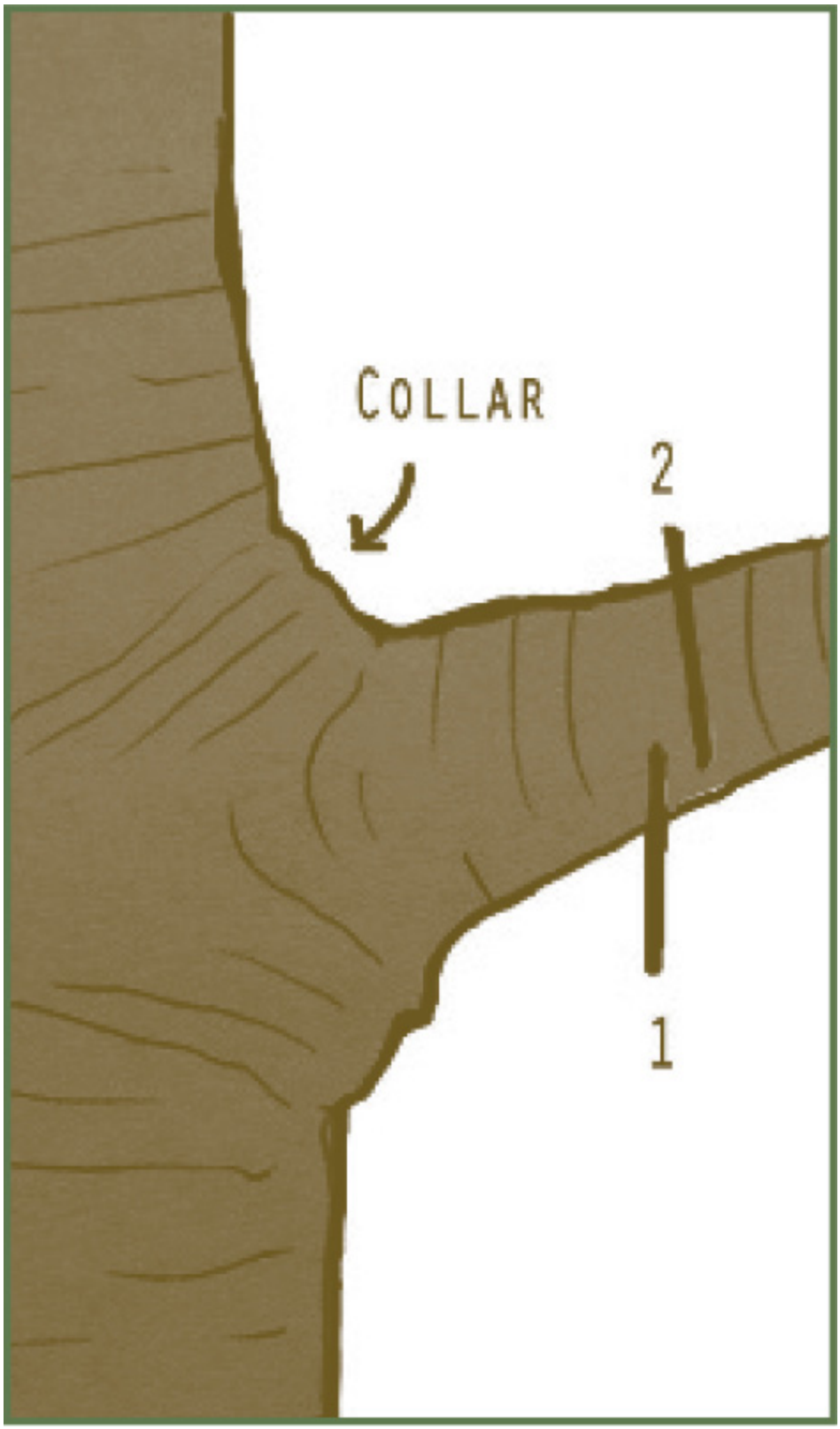
In the case of two of the most precious and overharvested rare plants in my home region of Appalachia—ginseng and goldenseal—I have found that by teaching students in my herbal programs about how to identify them and other rare plants, I have seen their collective, accurate knowledge develop over time. My students not only know how to identify these plants and share that information with others, but they also know how to choose other herbs that might be more abundant or more specific for their medicinal needs. I believe, perhaps naively, that my students will act as stewards of these precious beings. By providing up-to-date, specific information, we honor both the goodness in the hearts of those seeking this information and acknowledge that humans are not inherently destructive or ignorant of their impact.

Indeed, it is my hope as you read about ginseng, goldenseal, ghost pipe, and other rare plants in this book, you keep this conversation in mind. You can purchase sustainably grown ginseng and goldenseal from growers and medicine makers with good reputations and solid backgrounds in the field, especially Indigenous practitioners, as these two plants are native to North America. You can also grow some of these rare plants yourself and act as a steward for these important living beings. Discover their nuances with your own practice or decide you do not need those rare plants in your apothecary because there are so many other, more sustainable options.

HOW DO I HARVEST TREE BARK?

Harvesting bark is an important skill when making herbal medicines and requires considerable care. You can easily damage or even kill a tree with improper harvesting. These instructions are based on the wisdom of the talented Vermont herbalist Juliette Abigail Carr.

YOU'LL NEED THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE: a folding handsaw, pruners, a sharp knife that is small and not serrated, a drawknife if you want to harvest from a large tree, and a hatchet to remove twigs or fell a small tree.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The best time to harvest bark is in the fall, but looking for fallen branches is best at any time of the year. As the tree or shrub draws its compounds down into its roots, they will be more readily available in the bark. Harvesting bark can be a lot of work, so make sure you have enough time and energy to see it to completion. Pick a tree or shrub that is small so you can reach it easily and don't have to cut the whole thing down to get a branch.

Choose a small branch that's no larger than your arm. Locate the collar, which is the chunkiest part of the branch. It is either against the trunk or where one branch branches off another, as shown here. Use a saw to make a clean cut beyond the collar. (If you saw into the collar, it can damage the tree or cause harmful rot.) You can cut bottom up first (cut 1) if the branch is large, then cut down (cut 2) to ensure water won't pool in your cut and cause rot.

The processing is best done on a sunny, dry day to ensure the bark doesn't get wet on a tarp or cloth; also, it is easier to catch and collect all your bark pieces. Start by using your pruners or a knife to remove any small twigs not worth shaving the bark from (you can save those to use whole). Next, saw the branch into manageable pieces—not so small that you can't hold them easily and not so big they are unwieldy. Using a sharp knife, carefully slice away from you to take strips of bark off ensuring you remove the cambium or often greenish inner bark. This is the only part we will use in medicine making.

BASIC FOLK MEDICINE MAKING

Here are some simple ways to make the basic types of herbal medicines discussed in this book. Note that this is not an exhaustive list of techniques, and I hope you explore more with other herbalists as you hone your craft.

TEAS AND DECOCTIONS

Aside from eating a plant whole, tea was most likely the first way humans used plants for medicine. Teas and decoctions are essentially infusions of plant matter in hot water. You can make tea from both fresh and dried herbs, depending on the season and what is available. What makes a decoction different from a tea? A tea is an infusion of plant matter that been steeped in boiled water, while a decoction is the resulting liquid from gently simmering plant matter in water. Do you need to use dried herbs for tea? Definitely not. In tea making, herbs are dried only to store them. Fresh herbs are wonderful for tea.

Some Items Necessary for Making Teas:

- **Tea strainer and cup or mug**
- **Kettle for boiling water**

Some Items Necessary for Making Decoctions

- **1-pint, 1-quart, or a half-gallon glass jar with lid**
- **Medium saucepan**
- **Medium bowl or large measuring cup with a spout**
- **Strainers of various sizes**

When choosing herbs to use to make an infusion, it's important to note which part of the plant you are using. Delicate plant parts like leaves and flowers are great for tea because they can simply be placed in a tea strainer and infused briefly in hot water, then enjoyed. Boiling can damage the volatile oils and constituents of fresh herbs that you want to make medicine from. But harder, tougher plant parts, like roots and seeds, are excellent for making decoctions. For these, you simmer the herbs longer to make a stronger extract.

First, measure out the herbs needed for your recipe. For most herb teas, there's a recipe with the given amounts. Place your herbs in your jar and pour the freshly boiled water over them. Cover the jar with a lid or tea saucer and allow it to steep. Next, pour the tea through a strainer into another clean jar and either enjoy or cover with a lid and refrigerate for use throughout the day. Compost or discard the strained-out herbs, then enjoy your tea.

There are some variables, of course. For a strong medicinal tea and not just a pleasant beverage, the general ratio is 1 ounce of herb per quart of water and it is steeped for as long as 1 hour. Making larger batches of medicinal tea offers greater convenience, as you can drink the cup doses throughout the day. You can use most medicinal teas cold or lukewarm, but if you like you can gently reheat the tea if you've made a large batch.

Decoctions are made by simmering herbs in water rather than just steeping them. This method of medicine making is generally reserved for the tougher plant parts, like roots, stems, and seeds. You gently simmer these parts in a saucepan for 10 to 30 minutes, which helps them to break down and release the constituents inside. Plants like dandelion root, cinnamon bark, and birch twigs are all great candidates for decocting. Generally, you place the plant material in a saucepan and add water, then cover and simmer it for 10 to 30 minutes. After that, you can either allow it to steep further until lukewarm and then pour it through a strainer and enjoy, or strain it while hot and add honey or steep other, more delicate herbs in the hot decoction.

TINCTURES

Tinctures are herbal extracts made using water and alcohol. Some plants are not suitable for making alcohol tinctures, depending on their predominant chemical constituents. Marshmallow root, for example, is best used as a cold-water infusion because its most important plant chemicals are not soluble in alcohol, only in water. There are many solubility charts in books on basic medicine making, as well as online that you can consult.

CAUTION: The dosages given in the recipes are just a suggestion; some people may need only a few drops of a tincture, while others may need a few dropperfuls to feel similar effects. Please always try a new herb in a very small dose of 1 to 3 drops, especially if you are dealing with any serious longstanding health concerns or allergies. This information is for educational and historical purposes only, and is not a replacement for professional medical care.

Alcohol can extract phytochemicals like alkaloids, sugars, enzymes, essential oils, minerals, and vitamins from the plant material. Specific medicine-making information is addressed for each herb listed in this book.

There are two general ways to make tinctures: the folk method and the weight-to-volume ratio method. Each can be used appropriately, depending on your goal. If you are using a nutritive herb like calendula, chickweed, or cleavers that do not have intense action on the body, the folk method is a great choice. If you are making a tincture with an herb that causes intense actions and has toxicity at certain dosages, like poke root (*Phytolacca americana*), or it's an expensive or rare herb, the better choice is using a weight-to-volume method. In fact, using the recipes with the weight-to-volume ratio will give you exact dosages and ensure you get the most out of precious medicines.

THE FOLK METHOD

1. Wash if needed and chop the fresh herbs or crumble the dried herbs into small pieces. The smaller you make the pieces, the more surface area is exposed to the alcohol, allowing more phytochemicals to be extracted into the tincture. With dried herbs, it's best to remove the leaves and flowers from the stems and use these for medicine, as the stems of many herbs usually do not contain many volatile oils. There are of course exceptions, like in the case of angelica (*Angelica* spp.), in which the stem does indeed contain much valuable medicine.

2. Place the herbs in a clean, dry glass jar with a wide mouth. (You will see why the wide mouth is key when it comes time to cleaning it later!) Pour the high-proof alcohol over the herbs.

3. Seal the jar with its lid and place in a dark, dry place for 4 to 6 weeks to allow the herbs to infuse. Stir the tincture every once and a while to help the herbs fully release their chemicals into the alcohol. Make sure the alcohol level does not go down; if it does, top it off with additional alcohol to prevent spoilage and close again with the lid. Using BPA-free plastic lids or placing some wax paper between a metal lid and the glass jar can help to prevent the alcohol from corroding the lid and contaminating the medicine.

4. After 4 to 6 weeks, use a strainer or cheesecloth to strain out the herbs. Press down on the herbs or squeeze the cheesecloth to get all the tincture—you don't want to waste this valuable medicine. Some people use a tincture press to squeeze all the alcohol out of the herbs; however, a much more affordable option is to place the herbs from the tincture in a cheesecloth and then press that with a potato ricer. This can help to get every last drop out.

5. Place the strained tincture in a tincture bottle or use a clean small jar and label it with the date, name of the herb, and type of alcohol, including the percentage. Store the bottle or jar out of direct sunlight in a cool, dark place. Tinctures can last for up to 10 years when correctly prepared and stored. They lose some potency over time owing to some degradation of plant chemicals. With folk tinctures, adult dosages are typically 30 to 60 drops in a glass of water, taken three times a day. Certain herbs, known as "low dose botanicals," like poke root (*Phytolacca americana*), have unique and specific doses to avoid taking toxic or even lethal doses, much like some over-the-counter pharmaceuticals. Always remember that while there are some generalities in herbalism, knowing the specific plants and their doses is imperative.

The Weight-to-Volume Ratio Method

This method is excellent for many reasons, but the most important is that you can be sure what the dosage is—which is vital when using strong medicinal plants. You can also reproduce a particular recipe more easily. Just remember that plants are not machines—they are highly variable in their medicinal compound content—so some variation will occur naturally. This technique uses the proportion of herb weight to liquid volume.

Some Necessary Items for Making Tinctures

- **Measuring spoons and cups**
- **Fluid ounce (liquid) measuring cups**
- **Small scale for herbs**
- **Glass jars of various sizes**
- **Sharp knife or blender**

THE MEASUREMENT SYSTEM FOR TINCTURES

When making a tincture, there are a few terms that are helpful to know:

- **Marc: the solid matter in a tincture: plant roots, leaves, and/or flowers**
- **Menstruum: the liquid in a tincture: alcohol, water, vinegar, honey, or glycerin**

Weight-to-volume tinctures take two things into account: (1) the ratio of the weight of the marc to the volume of the menstruum, and (2) the amounts of alcohol and water in the menstruum. When written, this looks like a ratio and a percent. For example, when there is one part marc to two parts menstruum in 75% alcohol and 25% water, that is expressed as **1:2 75%**. This signals the content easily and quickly. You will see these ratios given for tinctures in this book for many of the herbs included.

In this ratio, the "parts" are often measured in ounces. Unfortunately, liquid and solid measurements using "ounces" are actually different and that must be taken into account. Solid ounces are weight measures; liquid (fluid) ounces are volume measures. Just be careful if you are making measurement changes from metric to U.S. customary or imperial, as in going from grams to milliliters.

Alcohol is a useful menstruum for many reasons. It both preserves the plant chemicals and partially breaks down the plant cell walls to release their contents. More important, there are many herbal constituents—for example, volatile and fixed oils, resins, and alkaloids—that are not very soluble in water but will dissolve in alcohol.

To make a 1:2 tincture, you use 1 ounce of marc for every 2 fluid ounces of menstruum, measured in a marked measuring cup (those two types of ounce measurements). If

you have more than 1 ounce of marc, you multiply the weight of the marc by the second number in the ratio.
For example:

- **With 5 ounces of an herb in a 1:2 tincture, use 10 fluid ounces of menstruum or, 2 x 5 =10.**
- **With 5 ounces of an herb at a 1:3 tincture, use 15 fluid ounces of menstruum or, 3 x 5 =15.**

Deciding what ratio and alcohol percentage to use can be confusing at first. Follow the specific recipe for the plant you use rather than a catchall recipe for all herbs. In this book, a ratio is provided for each tincture recipe in each herb's entry.

Another general note is that most fresh plant tinctures are made at a ratio of 1:2, while most dried plant tinctures are made at a ratio of 1:5. This is because the water content in fresh herbs tends to dilute the alcohol percentage, so a higher percent is needed to create a potent medicine.

THE ALCOHOL PROOF

After the ratio of marc to menstruum, the second part of this technique of tincture making is the alcohol percentage. Higher percentages, like 95%, are high-proof alcohols and they are most often used for fresh tincture making at a ratio of 1:2. This means the alcohol is 95% and the water is 5%, for a total of 100%. If you need a lower percentage of alcohol, you determine how much water to add to the high-proof alcohol to dilute it to the correct percent. The following is a helpful worksheet for you to copy and use for your recordkeeping if you decide to pursue this type of tincture making. Simply decide on the ratio and the alcohol percentage that you will find in each herbal tincture recipe in this book or in other herbal references.

WEIGHT-TO-VOLUME RATIO TINCTURE SHEET

Date: _____ / _____ / _____

HERB:

Common Name: _____

Scientific Name: _____

Dried / Fresh (Circle One)

TINCTURE RECIPE:

Herb weight, desired percent of alcohol, ratio

_____ oz. of herb _____ % alcohol _____ : _____

(For example, 10 oz. of herb at 60% alcohol 1:5)

First, convert your alcohol proof to alcohol percentage:

1. Proof _____ ÷ 2 = _____% alcohol

2. 100- _____% alcohol (1) = _____% water

A. Weight (fl. oz.) _____

B. Ratio used: _____ (example: 1:2)

C. Total ratio: _____ (A × second number in B with total weight of herbs D)

D. Total menstruum (fl. oz.): _____ (A × second number in ratio B)

If using an alcohol percentage different from 95%, do the following to discover how much water to add:

E. % alcohol (1) _____ ÷ desired % alcohol _____ = _____

F. (D) Total menstruum ÷ (E) = _____ fl. oz.

(how much alcohol you will use in the total menstruum)

G. To find the amount of water needed:

(D) Total menstruum – (F) total alcohol in menstruum =

_____ fl. oz. of water needed

Note: *Check your work: F + G should equal D (total menstruum).*

BITTERS

There are many ways to incorporate tincturing herbs into your life. You may already regularly take certain herbal tinctures without even really knowing it! The most common tinctures used by the general public are bitters used in cocktails. The history of bitters is clouded in mystery. No one knows for sure when people began to make and ingest bitter herbs tinctured in alcohol. In ancient Egypt, bitter herbs steeped in wine were used for a variety of ailments. In the Western world, the medicinal uses of such concoctions were widespread and documented by the twelfth century BCE. Much later, there were many figures in the nineteenth century who popularized the uses of bitters and the production of them as a product, but here we will focus on how to make them ourselves.

What started out as medicine is known today as an additive to fine cocktails. Essentially, bitters are bitter or bittersweet herbs soaked in alcohol, strained, and bottled for later use. Interestingly, the definition of a bitter is very much associated with the digestive system. The standard way of eating today does not favor the bitter flavor, yet as humans we are built to eat and physiologically react to this taste. It stimulates digestion. Beginning in the mouth, when we taste a bitter flavor, it signals the release and production of saliva, acids, enzymes, hormones, bile, and other compounds. Bitters can be taken for liver support and are utilized in liver formulas as well. I like to use them to treat an upset stomach, gas, bloating, and other digestive discomforts, or before and/or after eating a rich meal.

The Herbs for Making Bitters

Some of the common herbs, plants, and spices used to make bitters include angelica root, artichoke leaf, barberry root, black walnut leaf, burdock root, calamus root, chicory, cinchona bark, citrus peel, curly dock, dandelion root and leaf, gentian root, horehound, licorice root, mugwort, orange peel, Oregon grape root, orris root, sarsaparilla, wild cherry bark, and wormwood. But you can use any edible plant that has a bitter flavor.

You can also add other digestive-supporting herbs like allspice, aniseed, caraway, cardamom, cassia, celery seed, peppers, cinnamon, cloves, coriander,

fennel, ginger, juniper berries, nutmeg, peppercorns, star anise, or vanilla beans to ease the intensity of the flavor and help "make the medicine go down."

Some Necessary Items for Making Bitters

- **Measuring spoons and cups**
- **Fluid ounce liquid measures**
- **Glass jars of various sizes**
- **Sharp knife**

How to Make Bitters

First, you'll need an alcohol base. You will want to use a high-proof liquor (100 proof, or 50% alcohol by volume at least). It adds the least extra flavor if you use grain alcohol like Everclear or vodka. You can experiment with other spirits, such as high-proof bourbon, brandy, or rum. Rum makes wonderful warming bitters with herbs like dock root (*rumex* spp.)

Begin by chopping your desired ingredients. You can combine them and make a concoction, or tincture each herb separately and blend later to taste. You can make your tinctures using the classic herbalist's weight-to-volume ratio (1 part dried herb to 5 parts liquor, or 1 part fresh herb to 2 parts liquor). The ratio does not have to be exact.

You place the herbs in a jar, cover it, and allow them to steep in the alcohol for 4 to 6 weeks or until the desired flavor is achieved. The mixture should be kept out of direct sunlight in a dim, cool place. Shake the jar once every few days to allow the plant chemicals to fully interact with the alcohol. When it's done, you strain out the plant matter with a strainer, then funnel the liquid into clean, dry glass jars and enjoy as a digestive medicine by the tablespoonful. The recommended serving is 10 to 30 drops in warm water before or after a meal.

Salves and Infused Oils

Salve is made by first infusing an oil with the herbs of your choice, then solidifying it with beeswax or candelilla wax. These are some of the oils and fats commonly used in salves, alone or combined: extra-virgin olive oil, jojoba oil,

coconut oil, shea butter, tallow (bovine or deer). You'll also need a 1-quart jar with a lid, a double boiler, and a sharp knife.

How to Make Salves

This is a general guide to making salves; follow the specific recipes in this book or use this information below to create your own recipes.

First, gather the dried herbs to be infused. Loosely fill a clean, dry jar with the herbs and add the oil of choice to cover them so no parts stick out above the oil. Loosely close the jar to allow any remaining moisture to escape, then place the jar in the top pot of a double boiler. Place the double boiler over low to medium heat and gently heat the jar of herbs and oil until the scent of the herbs fills the air (about 3 hours). Be careful not to "boil" the mix or boil away the water in the bottom pot.

Alternatively, for a less energy-intensive method, set the jar with herbs and oil to slowly infuse for a month, in a cool, dark place. Check frequently, and once the oil is fragrant, strain out the plant matter with a strainer or fine cheesecloth. At this point, you can keep the oil as is to use on the skin, or proceed to add beeswax and make the salve into an ointment.

Measure ¼ cup beeswax or soy wax per 1 cup of your infused oil. More wax makes a harder salve, and less makes an oilier consistency, heat over low heat until the beeswax is melted, stirring constantly. Pour the salve into a dry glass jar, cover, and label. Store in a cool place out of direct light.

How to Make Herbal Compresses

Compresses are, generally speaking, warm or hot herbal teas on a clean cloth held on the skin. They are an external medicine. Simply brew a strong tea of the herb you desire and then dip a clean cloth in the tea and apply directly to the swelling, sting, boil, or injured skin.

How to Make an Herbal Poultice

Poultices are similar to compresses except they are mashed herbs, sometimes mixed with other medicinal compounds like clay or honey, which are then secured with a clean gauze or cloth on the skin. Warm herb poultices are

excellent for stings, swelling, bruises, and painful infections. However, never place herbs on a puncture wound, as material can become trapped inside and cause further infection. Simple poultices can even be made by chewing a leaf, like plantain (*Plantago major*), and applying this "spit poultice" directly to a beesting or small wound. Just don't put your spit on someone else's wound!

ADDING ALCOHOL TO INFUSED OILS : You can add some alcohol to dried herbs as an intermediate solvent that will help break down the cell walls of the plant before infusing the herbs in oil, and this can result in a more potent herbally infused oil. To do this, weigh the amount of plant material you'll be infusing and add three-fourths of that weight in 95% alcohol. Alternatively, grind the dried herbs to be infused into a powder, place them in the jar, then add just a teaspoon of alcohol and stir gently to dampen the herbs. Close the jar.

The ground herbs have more surface area to be exposed to the alcohol, allowing more phytochemicals to be drawn out and added to the oil. Let these alcohol-dampened herbs sit overnight in the jar. The following day, cover the herbs completely with the oil and gently heat them, with the lid the off, in the double boiler for 3 hours. This will help the oil infuse, plus allow the alcohol to evaporate. Using care not to burn yourself, strain out the herbs, clean the jar, and put the oil back into it. Store the oil in a cool, dark place.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book should be one of many in your herbal library. I am here to support you on your journey, but as you can see, there is so much to know, and new things are being discovered every day. This book is by no means an exhaustive examination of these plants, trees, and shrubs. They all deserve an entire book just for themselves.

Keeping that in mind, let's look at an example of how to use the information in this book to best advantage. Suppose we consider witch hazel. Here's what each line in the plant profile means and how to interpret it:

WITCH HAZEL: This is the common name or names of the plant.

HAMAMELIS VIRGINIANA: This is the scientific name of the plant; the first name is the genus and the second name is the species.

HAMAMELIDACEAE FAMILY: This is the name of the scientific family to which the plant belongs.

CAUTION: *What to watch out for before considering using this plant for medicine.*

ORIGINS: Where the plant comes from, where it is native, and where it has spread to.

PART USED: Which parts of the plant body are used for medicine.

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: What the overall effects are of the plant's medicinal actions, a shorthand list of the most sought-after actions (see the

Glossary, for the meaning of these terms).

TASTE: What the plant causes the mouth to feel, what it tastes like.

SUBSTITUTIONS: Which other plants have similar actions. This section is helpful if you have an allergy, but remember that this does not mean the substituted plants act in exactly the same way.

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Important information about how best to harvest or not harvest the plant.

TRADITIONAL USES: How the plant has been used historically. While some of this information may no longer reflect active practices, the cultures and peoples mentioned are still alive and vibrant modern societies. The past tense used here refers to specific historical uses and to uses no longer practiced.

MODERN USES: How the plant can be used today.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS: Specific recipes for using the plant.

HERBAL GLOSSARY

ALKALOID:

A basic compound containing at least one nitrogen atom. It often has a profound effect on the body.

ALTERATIVE:

An herbal action describing those herbs that help to restore the proper functions of the body by allowing the body to deal more effectively with metabolic waste.

ASTRINGENT:

An action or characteristic of some herbs in which the skin is drawn together or made tauter because of constituents in the herbs.

ANALGESIC:

Relieves pain when administered internally or externally.

ANXIOLYTIC:

Herbs that have anti-anxiety actions.

ANTICATARRHAL:

An herbal action that helps address the buildup of excess mucus and inflammation in the upper respiratory system.

ANTIDEPRESSANT:

Helps relieve and/or prevent depressed states of mind.

ANTILITHIC:

Herbs that prevent and help in the passage of urinary stones.

ANTIMICROBIAL:

Helps the body's immune system to fight and resist the spread of pathogenic bacteria and viruses.

ANTIOXIDANT:

An herbal action that protects the body against free radical damage caused by oxidation in the body.

BRACT:

A modified leaf or scale on a plant.

CARMINATIVE:

Plants rich in aromatic volatile oils, which often have a strong odor and can affect digestion and aid in digestive health.

CHOLAGOGUE:

Promotes discharge and flow of bile from the gallbladder.

CORDIAL:

Cordials are made by combining herbs with alcohol and equal amounts of sweetener.

COMPRESS:

When herbal material is wrapped inside a cloth and the cloth is applied to the body.

DECOCTION:

A strong tea made from plants by simmering the plants generally 15 minutes or more.

DEMULCENT:

An herbal action that forms a protective coating over mucous membranes. Moistening action.

EMMENAGOGUE:

Increases or supports the beginning of menstruation.

EXPECTORANT:
An herbal action that supports the expulsion of excess mucus from the respiratory tract.

GALACTAGOGUE:
An herbal action that increases milk production in lactation.

HERBAL ACTION:
What effect an herb has on the body.

HYPOTENSIVE:
Lowers the blood pressure.

HYPNOTIC:
An herbal action that relaxes and sedates, herbs that induce sleep.

INFLORESCENCE:
The complete flower head of a plant including stems, stalks, bracts, and flowers.

INFUSION:
Herbs steeped in boiled water.

INVOLUCRE:
A botanical term referring to a whorl or rosette of bracts surrounding an inflorescence or at the base of an umbel.

LAXATIVE:
An herbal action that supports evacuation of bowels.

LYMPHATIC:
An herbal action that supports health of the lymphatic system.

MARC:
The solid parts in a tincture—that is, the plant matter being tinctured.

MENSTRUUM:

The liquid or substance you are extracting herbal medicine with. Example: Tinctures are a medicine using alcohol as a menstruum.

MUCILAGE:

A water soluble polysaccharide, or sugar substance, extracted as a viscous or gelatinous solution from plant roots, seeds, etc. and used in medicines. A "gooey" substance that can be extracted from certain plants like marshmallow and sassafras in water.

NERVINE:

An herbal action that modulates or calms the nervous system.

OXYMEL:

An herbal extract made with a mixture of honey and vinegar, rather than alcohol or water. This technique comes from ancient Persia and Greece.

POULTICE:

A wet mash of herbs applied to the outside of the body for medicinal purposes.

RHIZOME:

An underground horizontal stem from which both roots and shoots grow.

RUBEFACIENT:

An herbal action that reddens the skin through vasodilation.

SALVE:

An herbally infused oil mixed with a wax (like beeswax or soy wax).

SEDATIVE:

An herbal action that calms the nervous system overall.

SOPORIFIC:

Herbs that promote sleep.

TANNIN:

Astringent molecules that bind to proteins. (This is why they make your mouth *feel* dry. They bind to parts of the saliva in your mouth.)

TEA:

A hot water extract of an herb—that is, an infusion.

TINCTURE:

An alcohol extract of an herb.

TONIC:

Herbs that are gentle enough to be taken daily for long-term dietary support.

UMBEL:

A flower cluster in which stalks of nearly equal length spring from a common center and form a flat or curved surface.

VULNERARY:

An herbal action that aids in wound healing.

THE HERBS

1. AGRIMONY

AGRIMONIA SPP.

Rosaceae family

CAUTION: *This plant has an effect on blood sugar; please use caution if you suffer from diabetes.*

ORIGINS: There are around 15 agrimony species, however only certain ones are used extensively in herbal medicine. *Agrimonia eupatoria* is native to Europe, North Africa, southwest Asia, and Macaronesia and was introduced to North America. *A. pilosa* is native to Asia and eastern Europe; *A. gryposepala* and *A. parviflora* are native to North America.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Agrimony has deeply divided, faintly hairy leaves that grow in a circular, rosette pattern. The leaves are toothed and deep green. A "steeple" of little yellow flowers crowns the flowering stalk, which eventually turns over into hooked burr-like seeds that will cling to any passerby!

PART USED: leaves, flowers

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: drying, astringent, vulnerary, nervine, cooling, relaxant

TASTE: mild

SUBSTITUTIONS: rose, blackberry

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This plant often grows in abundance and is relatively easy to grow yourself. Select a few leaves from each plant to avoid killing the whole plant. Snip off the tops with sharp shears to harvest only the flowers.

TRADITIONAL USES: The word *agrimony* comes from the Greek word *agremon*, which was believed to refer to cataracts in the eyes. Starting in ancient Greece, the seeds and herb were infused in wine to treat dysentery, and the leaves were used to treat stubborn ulcers. It was also indicated as a liver herb, or for

"faults of the liver." The Anglo-Saxons called it "garclive" and used it for snake bites.[1]

The plant's wound-healing properties were celebrated throughout Europe during the Middle Ages. When mixed with vinegar and mugwort, agrimony was applied to a variety of wounds—namely, those incurred in battle. Its powers to stop bleeding were apparently made more powerful by the recommended addition of pounded frogs and human blood to treat internal hemorrhaging. In England, in the eighteenth century, the juice and crushed leaves were used frequently by common people for injuries and wounds. In Ireland, this plant was sometimes known in Gaelic as *Marbhdhraighean*. It was also sometimes known as "tea-plant" because of its use as a substitute for tea during lean times. It was used for colds, liver issues, and old ulcers of the skin.[2]

In Iraq, agrimony was a strengthening medicine and was used for worms, to bring on the menses, and to treat diseases of the skin and intestines.

The species of the Americas, *A. gryposepala* or *A. parviflora*, were used by native peoples. In Cherokee, it is called *a la s ga lo gi*. They have used it as a tonic and blood purifier; the Cherokee also used infusions of it for bleeding, urinary issues, and more—often using the root, which was not commonly used in Europe. The root was infused in cold water and drunk regularly to cure bowel trouble. Agrimony was also used for skin issues and pox, as a gynecological aid, for fevers, and any other ailments.[3]

MODERN USES: Agrimony is a gentle astringent, nervine, and digestive, and it is helpful for the mucous membranes. Just as it was historically used for wounds, it is still valuable as an astringent to help tighten inflamed tissues. All the rose family plants are rich in medicinally helpful tannins that aid in speeding the healing of wounds and soothing inflammation. Add a handful of this herb (fresh or dried) to sitz baths for hemorrhoids, vaginal irritation, or itching. It can also help lower blood sugar. Its astringency is also helpful for the digestive system, and it is mildly bitter and beneficial for issues of the liver and gallbladder.[4] Agrimony tea can soothe irritated gut problems like leaky gut, as well as diarrhea. Mix it with calendula, marshmallow-root cold-water infusion, and plantain leaf

as a tea blend for chronic gut discomforts, owing to its soothing and moistening actions. However, keep in mind that too much astringency can be irritating.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

Like many other Rosaceae family members, the tannins in this plant are one of the sources of its medicinal powers.

AGRIMONY TEA

1 tablespoon dried agrimony leaves and flowers
1 cup freshly boiled water

Place the dried leaves and flowers in a quart jar. Pour the hot water over the herbs and steep covered for 30 minutes. Strain and enjoy or store in the fridge once cooled for up to 3 days.

For mild diarrhea, colds, and coughs, drink 1 cup three times a day.

AGRIMONY MEDICINAL INFUSED WINE

1 cup fresh agrimony leaves
½ cup dried blackberry leaves
½ cup dried oak inner bark (red or white oak)
4 cups dry red wine

Place the agrimony leaves, blackberry leaves, and oak bark in a 1-quart glass jar. Cover with the wine and close the lid, and allow to steep for 4 weeks. Strain and discard the plant material. Carefully funnel the wine into a clean 750-ml wine bottle, close with a pop top lid or cork, and label. It will store up to 6 months. Take 2 to 6 tablespoons three times per day for indigestion or an acidic stomach.

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1 Madame Grieve, *A Modern Herbal* (Stone Basin Books, 1931/1992), 13.

2 D. Allen and G. Hatfield, *Medicinal Plants in Folk Tradition: An Ethnobotany of Britain & Ireland* (Timber Press, 2004).

3 J. T. Garrett, *The Cherokee Herbal: Native Plant Medicine from the Four Directions* (Bear & Co., 2003).

4 Sajah Popham, *Evolutionary Herbalism: Science, Spirituality, and Medicine from the Heart of Nature* (North Atlantic Books, 2019).

2. ANGELICA

ANGELICA SPP.

Apiaceae family

CAUTION: *Angelica stimulates the heart, so don't use it longer than two weeks. Do not use it if pregnant, if you'd like to become pregnant, have diabetes, or are on blood thinners. Those who experience heavy menstrual bleeding should also avoid this herb. Avoid it if you have gastric ulcers. Some people may get photodermatitis from the oils in the leaves when in broad sunlight. This plant resembles poisonous members of the carrot family, like poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), so be extra careful when foraging. Avoid taking while on Warfarin, salicylates, and anticoagulants.*

ORIGINS: This biennial carrot-family plant earns its name from the Latin *herba angelica* or "herb of the angels." *Angelica archangelica* v. archangelica is the most often cultivated variety for use in herbal medicine. There are 90 species throughout the world in temperate climates, 24 of which grow in America. *Angelica a.* is most likely endemic to Japan, while there are also species in China, North America, Korea, India, and Europe. Other names include masterwort, root of the Holy Ghost, herb of the angels, and dong quai.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Angelica grows in clumps of divided, numerous-toothed leaves that are in three groups. They have juicy, fluted hollow stems. It flowers in umbels of small yellow-green flowers that become oblong plump fruits.

PARTS USED: seeds, stems, roots

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: antibacterial, antimicrobial, carminative, stimulant, emmenagogue, stomachic, antispasmodic, anti-rheumatic, antiseptic, expectorant, diuretic, tonic, diaphoretic, nervine

TASTE: warming, spicy, pungent, bitter, sweet

SUBSTITUTIONS: lovage

TRADITIONAL USES: From root to flower, all parts of this beautiful and alien-looking plant are edible and medicinal. Its angelic associations are reportedly because they are said to flower on the feast day of Saint Michael. In Southern American folk medicine, it is prized as a digestive aid and a heart stimulant. It is also considered a general health tonic as powerful as ginseng. It can be used along with burdock and seven barks (*Hydrangea arborescens*) as a good stimulant for the liver and gallbladder. It was also used to aid bile production and general digestion.[1]

The Sami people of Lapland (Scandinavia) make a traditional musical instrument out of angelica, known as the *fadno*. Angelica (*A. archangelica*) root has a long history of use in brewing and in liquors in Europe, such as an ingredient in Chartreuse. In the Middle Ages, it was a chief remedy against the Black Death, or the Plague, and it was also used in the Spanish influenza outbreak of 1918–19. Further, it was used as an amulet to ward off evil throughout Europe; chewing the root was also believed to prevent infection from most contagions.

In traditional Chinese medicine, where they are known as dong quai, angelica roots are used for tonifying, replenishing, and invigorating the blood, as well as for relieving pain and lubricating the intestine. It is used to treat irregular menstruation and amenorrhea.[2] In Japanese folk medicine, it is a diuretic, tonic, and digestive and is applied topically to speed wound healing and prevent infection.

In Alaska, *A. lucida* is used traditionally by Inuit peoples as a seasickness remedy by inhaling the fumes of the roasted root. It is also heavily used for a large variety of ailments and as a delicious food. It seems no matter where the plant dwells, the strong perfume, sweet and spicy flavor, and beautiful appearance have rendered it a plant that evil flees from.

MODERN USES: Angelica is an excellent warming, circulatory stimulant. The root and seed tea are wonderful for treating coughs and colds. Owing to the warming nature of this pungent herb, it is helpful as a diaphoretic and as an antimicrobial for deep-seated lung infections. The tea and tincture are also uterine stimulating, and can be helpful in bringing on delayed or very light

menses. It is also a helpful aid for slow digestion. Eating the candied stalks before and/or after meals is not only delicious but also stimulating for gastric secretions. Use caution if you have diabetes, as it can raise blood sugar levels. A liquor or a tincture can be made from the seeds, stalks, or root.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

ANGELICA TEA

Add chamomile flowers to the tea for further digestive soothing. Work with this plant to help with the flu and colds to encourage sweat to break a fever.

1 teaspoon ground angelica root
1 cup freshly boiled water

Place the root in a jar. Pour in the hot water and steep for 30 minutes covered. Strain and let cool.

Drink 1 cup of the cold tea twice a day for digestive upset, gas, and general stomach pains. The tea can also be added to a bath to support strengthening the immune system and nervous disorders. You can store any extra in the fridge for 2 to 3 days.

Note: Angelica seed tea can be made in the same manner and is excellent for overcoming chronic or long illnesses.

ANGELICA TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh root
1:5, 65%: dried root

See pages 28–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 25 to 50 drops three times a day.

ANGELICA LEAF POULTICE

1 handful of fresh angelica leaves
1 cup freshly boiled water

Wrap the fresh leaves in a piece of muslin and dip into a saucepan of recently boiled water. Let cool until easy to handle. Place the warm leaf compress on outbreaks of poison ivy, rashes, and other skin issues to soothe inflammation.

ANGELICA CANDIED DIGESTIVE STALKS

This recipe is inspired by the wonderful forager chef Alan Bergo,[3] as well as historical sources. Note: The best time to harvest the stems or stalks for these candies is May or June in temperate climates.

8 to 10 fresh angelica stems

About 4 cups water
6 cups sugar, plus more as desired
Tongs

Cut the angelica stems into strips small enough to fit into a 1-quart glass jar. Bring the water in a medium saucepan to a boil over high heat, add the stems and cook for a minute or two, working in batches if necessary; the blanching will loosen the tough skins. Let cool briefly, then use tongs to pull out the angelica and peel it with a paring knife.

Add the sugar to the hot water in the saucepan and stir until dissolved. Bring the water back to a rolling boil, then add the angelica stems and cook for 3 to 4 minutes; add them in batches, if necessary, to ensure they are submerged. Using tongs, remove the stems and place in a strainer to drain.

Place the stems back in the jar and bring the syrup back to a boil. Pour this over the stems, cool, cover, and refrigerate overnight.

The next day, drain the syrup from the jar into the saucepan, bring to a boil again, and pour over the stalks. Repeat this process one more time. When cool enough to handle, remove the stems from the syrup and pat dry with paper towels. Toss the stems with additional sugar, if you wish, then place them on a rack on a baking sheet. Put the baking sheet in an oven on the lowest setting, with the door ajar, or leave on a cooling rack at room temperature until dried but still slightly pliable after about 6 to 8 hours.

When the stems are dried, transfer them to a clean glass jar and cover with the lid. Refrigerate until needed.

They are a wonderful historic candy and digestive aid; if you leave the stalks round, they are a magical straw for herbal mocktails and cocktails.

Angelica Liqueur

Most people use the roots to craft the liqueur, but I prefer using the unripe seeds, as harvesting them preserves my stock of plants in the garden.

Roughly 4 cups unripe angelica seed heads (not yet yellow)
Liquor of choice (cognac, brandy, or moonshine)
Peel of 1 organic blood orange
1 cup honey

Fill a 1-quart glass jar with the seed heads. Pour in enough liquor to fill the jar, then add the orange peel. Cover and allow to sit in a cool, dark place for 1 month.

Pour the liquid through a strainer into a bowl to remove the seeds and peel. Rinse the jar, then pour the liquid back into it. Add the honey and stir well. Finally, cover with the lid and store in a cool, dark place.

To use, add by the tablespoon to hot tea, over an ice cube in a small glass, or enjoy by the spoonful. Figure on 1 to 3 tablespoons per day for colds, flus, upset stomach, chills, or nervous tension in the stomach.

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1 Darryl Patton, *Mountain Medicine: The Herbal Remedies of Tommie Bass* (Natural Reader Press, 2004).

2 Amitava Dasgupta, “Anti-Inflammatory Herbal Supplements,” in *Perspectives in Translational Cell Biology: Translational Inflammation*, ed. Jeffrey K. Actor and Keri C. Smith (Academic Press, 2019), 69–91.

3 Alan Bergo, Forager/Chef website, n.d., https://foragerchef.com/.

3. APPLE

MALUS SPP.

Rosaceae family

CAUTION: *Apple seeds, leaves, and bark, like those of many other rose family members, contain hydrocyanic acid, or cyanide, therefore use caution with long-term use and dosage. The seeds of these plants contain the highest concentrations and should not be tinctured or decocted. It should also be noted that heating these compounds destroys them substantially.*[1]

ORIGINS: Apples, or *Malus sieversii*, originated in central Asia, in modern-day Kazakhstan, where they have grown for thousands of years. Their origin is evidenced in the Kazakhstan capital city's name, Almaty, which comes from the Kazakh word for "apple." From here, the apple has become an iconic and well-known fruit; it is centrally featured in the folklore and religious beliefs of cultures all over the world. There are more than 7,500 species of apples worldwide, half of which are grown in China. There are three varieties native to North America: *Malus coronaria, M. fusca*, and *M. ioensis.* A popular subgroup of apples are crabapples, a smaller tart variety now mostly grown for its showy flowers.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Apple trees and fruits have wide variability, but in general they are small trees with gray-brown scaly bark that can reach up to 25 feet in height. They have oval leaves edged with fine teeth and five-petaled white flowers sometimes tinged with pink. Their fruit can vary in size from that of a dime to that of a large softball, but they are generally round pome fruits in yellow, red, green, and/or pinkish hues.

PART USED: leaf, bark, fruit

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: cooling, astringent, tonic, alterative

TASTE: cooling, sour, sweet

SUBSTITUTIONS: oak bark

TRADITIONAL USES: Apples and their cousins, crabapples, have been used for medicine for thousands of years. The crabapple is called *wergulu* in Old English, and was counted among the nine sacred plants for illness and infection in the tenth-century Anglo-Saxon incantation "Nine Herbs Charm":

This is the herb called wergulu
a seal sent this forth across the sea's spine
for the harm of poison...

In the Early Middle Ages, in what is now Germany, Hildegard von Bingen—a visionary mystic, abbess, and herbalist—used the sap of apple trees to cure kidney troubles. Hildegard also used young, pounded spring-apple leaves mixed with grape-vine water in the eyes at night to relieve fogginess in vision. In European herbal tradition, eating apples was also a way to increase liver function and rid a sluggish body of wastes, largely owing to its high fiber content.

In traditional Chinese medicine, different-colored apples are aligned with different parts of the body. Apples are also eaten to clear the five major organs and meridian channels to balance *qi*. During fall and winter, when the body is in *yin* excess, apples are eaten to help eliminate the heat that causes dehydration. The fruit is also used to help the lungs recover from coughs and colds. Apples are also prescribed for hair loss, normalizing the bowels, and much more.

Christopher Sauer, an early American settler herbalist, recommended apple cider for kidney issues—namely, kidney stones or "gravel," as it was referred to historically in the United States. Hot roasted sweet apples were also applied with a cloth to sore and inflamed eyes during this period. In Southern folk medicine, the inner bark of apple trees has been used for heartburn and acidity of the stomach. The famous Alabama traditional herbalist Tommie Bass said, "Make a tea or syrup from the bark (or leaves in the summer) for a sour stomach or if the stomach burns. It settles your stomach."[2] The astringency of apple medicine has also made it a longtime remedy for chronic loose stools and diarrhea.

MODERN USES: All members of the illustrious rose family are rich in tannins and act as an astringent on the body's tissues. These tannins in the leaves, bark

and flowers make the apple a lovely, gently bitter, and astringent plant. An infusion made from the leaves and bark is a great astringent preparation and serves as an excellent mouthwash to tighten and soothe bleeding gums. The pectin in apples is a powerful chelator; for instance, it was used quite successfully to help victims of the Chernobyl disaster to help remove the metal caesium from their bodies. Eating apples and drinking cider in moderation may also help prevent many types of cancer, especially those of the lungs, colon, and liver.

Apple leaf poultices can be placed on sore or inflamed eyes, skin irritations, and itchy patches. The bark decoction soothes acid reflux by tonifying the tissues rather than neutralizing the acidity. Eating a tart fresh apple aids digestion and is a great remedy for constipation. The soluble fiber in apples also helps to lower cholesterol.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

APPLE LEAF POULTICE

1 handful fresh apple leaves, chopped
2 cups freshly boiled water

Line a medium bowl with a piece of muslin. Place the apple leaves on the muslin. Pour the hot water over the leaves and steep for 1 minute. Carefully lift the muslin and set aside to cool until safe to the touch but still quite warm.

Place the muslin with the hot leaves on inflamed swellings, boils, or infected insect bites or scratches that may have come from wanderings about in the fields or forest.

APPLE BARK DECOCTION

You can finely shred the bark with a pair of sharp pruning shears.

1 cup shredded apple bark
4 cups water

Place the bark in a medium saucepan, add the water, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer covered for 30 minutes.

Strain the liquid. Let the water cool to a safe temperature, then transfer to a 1-quart glass jar with a lid for storage. Store in the fridge up to 3 days.

Drink up to 3 cups a day for no longer than 10 days or use externally in a bath or as a compress.

APPLE BLOSSOM TEA

2 tablespoons fresh apple blossoms
1 cup freshly boiled water

Place the apple blossoms in a tea strainer set into a cup or mug. Pour in the hot water and steep for 15 minutes. Lift out the strainer and enjoy.

Sip the tea to calm the nerves or as a gentle digestive aid.

INFUSED MEDICINAL CIDER SYRUP

This alcohol-free medicine is a wonderful way to give children a good dose of gentle herbs or a sweet way to add herbs to mocktails and desserts. Use any herb of your choice for a beautiful, fragrant digestive medicine that helps reduce gas and bloating.

1 quart fresh apple cider
4 tablespoons chopped fresh herbs or 2 tablespoons dried herbs (cardamom or ginger are lovely)
Sassafras root, spicebush twigs, or sweet birch twigs (optional)

Place the apple cider in a medium saucepan over medium heat and let it cook down gently, stirring occasionally. When the cider is reduced by half, add the fresh or dried herbs and simmer until liquid is reduced by at least half again (figure 4 parts cider to 1 part herbs). Cook the cider down until it thickens. If using, add the sassafras root or twigs and let cool. Strain the syrup into a glass jar, cover, and refrigerate for up to 2 months (but routinely check for mold).

Add 1 tablespoon of this delicious syrup to some bubbly water or mix it into hot water to make tea.

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1 E. N. Modesto et al., "Oven Drying and Hot Water Cooking Processes Decrease HCN Contents of Cassava Leaves," *Food Research International* 119 (May 2019): 517–23, https://doi:10.1016/j.foodres.2019.01.029, Epub January 14, 2019, PMID: 30884684.

2 J. K. Crellin et al., *Herbal Medicine Past and Present* (United Kingdom: Duke University Press, 1990), 59.

4. BIRCH

BETULA LENTA, B. PUBESCENS, B. PENDULA

Betulaceae family

CAUTION: *Birch contains salicylates, which often do not irritate those with aspirin allergies; however, it is best to use caution.*

ORIGINS: The *Betula* genus comprises 30 to 60 species, though they are known to hybridize, which makes determining an exact number of species difficult. In North America, one of the most commonly used native birches in herbal medicine is black birch, *B. lenta*. In Europe, Asia, and North Africa, downy birch, *B. pubescencs*, and silver birch, *B. pendula*, are common.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: One of the most striking things about these trees are their lenticels, or lines that appear like horizontal slash marks on thinner, younger bark. The trees have alternate, finely toothed leaves, and they create elongated clusters of flowers called catkins, with both male and female flowers on the same tree.[1] The bark of the black birch also releases a strong, wintergreen-like scent when cut.

PART USED: bark

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: anti-inflammatory, anodyne, vulnerary, antiseptic

TASTE: sweet, aromatic

SUBSTITUTIONS: white willow

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Pick up storm-fallen branches or prune back small branches to ensure you don't harm the tree. Depending on your region, birches can be abundant or less common, so make sure you are aware of their local populations.

TRADITIONAL USES: Birches are used as medicine all over the temperate world. They have similar uses across cultures for arthritis, pain, colds, fevers, and urinary issues. In North America, *B. lenta* was used historically by the Cherokee nation as a leaf tea for dysentery, while the bark infusion was used for colds and stomach and urinary issues.[2] The Chippewa traditionally used birch for dysentery, as well as pneumonia and heart troubles.[3] The Mohegan used the bark infusion as a spring tonic,[4] a tradition adopted by white settlers and enslaved people as a part of the Southern folk medicine tradition. The Iroquois used a pleasant and stimulating tea made from the twigs for energy, soreness in the body, and colds and fevers.[5]

In Bosnian folk medicine, the *B. pendula* bark and leaves are used for urinary issues, mixed with burdock root for a hair rinse to treat dandruff, and used generally for the flu, fevers, and rheumatism and pain.[6] In Transylvanian folk medicine, it was used to treat liver and heart diseases, as well as kidney stones, digestive issues, and wounds.[7] Birch trees are also the host of chaga mushrooms, which are no longer sustainable to harvest, and birch polypore mushrooms, both powerful medicinal mushrooms used in the temperate world since prehistoric times for everything from cancer to colds.

MODERN USES: Black birch, *B. lenta*, contains methyl salicylates, which give off a minty, wintergreen scent. These compounds are similar to those found in aspirin and are helpful anti-inflammatories for headaches, body aches, muscle sprains, and sore muscles, in general. While the twigs and bark are the parts most often worked with in Western herbalism, birch leaf tea is a bitter yet popular drink in parts of northern Europe.

The bark tea is helpful for general soreness and pain, and the leaf tea is useful for urinary tract infections, as a diuretic, and as a wound wash. The bark also

contains betulin, which has a marked effect on blood sugar regulation.[8] The bark makes a wonderful oxymel and also infuses in oil well to be used as a rub for sore muscles.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

BIRCH BARK DECOCTION

1 cup finely chopped birch bark or twigs
4 cups water

Place the bark or twigs in a medium saucepan and add the water. Place over low heat, cover, and simmer for 30 minutes. Turn off the heat and allow the mixture to cool covered until it reaches room temperature.

Strain into a jar, cover, and keep in the fridge for up to 3 days. Drink 1 to 2 cups at a time throughout the day for inflammation, pain, colds, flu, and urinary tract infections. You can also add this decoction to a bath for sore muscles or use it warm as a soothing wound wash.

BLACK BIRCH BARK OXYMEL

4 cups finely chopped black birch twigs and bark
1 ½ cups raw honey
1 ½ cups organic apple cider vinegar

Fill a 1-quart jar with the bark and twigs, add the honey and vinegar. Place a piece of wax paper on the top and then lid. Let the mixture infuse for 2 to 4 weeks in a cool, dark place, occasionally stirring with a clean spoon.

Strain the mixture into a jar, then lid and store in a cool, dark place.

To use, add 1 tablespoon to 1 cup of hot water or add to seltzer or tea.

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1 Liz Neves, *Northeast Medicinal Plants: Identify, Harvest, and Use 111 Wild Herbs for Health and Wellness* (Timber Press, 2020), 116.

2 Paul B. Hamel and Mary U. Chiltoskey, *Cherokee Plants and Their Uses: A 400 Year History* (Herald Publishing, 1975), 25.

3 Melvin R. Gilmore, *Some Chippewa Uses of Plants* (University of Michigan Press, 1933), 128.

4 Gladys Tantaquidgeon, *Folk Medicine of the Delaware and Related Algonkian Indians* (Pennsylvania Historical Commission Anthropological Papers, 1972), 70, 128.

5 James William Herrick, “Iroquois Medical Botany” (PhD diss., State University of New York, Albany, 1977), 300.

6 B. Saric-Kundalic et al., “Ethnobotanical Study on Medicinal Use of Wild and Cultivated Plants in Middle, South and West Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 131 (August 2010): 33–55.

7 N. Papp et al., “The Uses of *Betula pendula* Roth Among Hungarian Csángós and Székelys in Transylvania, Romania,” *Acta Societatis Botanicorum Poloniae* 83, no. 2 (2014): 113–22.

8 A. Alqahtani et al., “The Pentacyclic Triterpenoids in Herbal Medicines and Their Pharmacological Activities in Diabetes and Diabetic Complications,” *Current Medicinal Chemistry* 20, no. 7 (2013): 908–31.

5. BLACK COHOSH

ACTAEA RACEMOSA

Ranunculaceae family

CAUTION: *Taking too much of this plant can cause severe headaches, nausea, and vomiting. Do not take for longer than six months at a time continuously.*

ORIGINS: This beautiful perennial plant is native to eastern North America and is an important part of Indigenous medicine.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: This woodland plant has unique green stems topped with large compound, smooth leaves that emerge from a blue-black colored joint. The creamy white flowers grow in terminal inflorescences up to 3 feet in late summer. They often arch gracefully like white fairy wands in the shady forests where they grow.

PART USED: roots

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: nervine, antispasmodic, anti-inflammatory, emmenagogue, sedative

TASTE: bitter, stimulating

SUBSTITUTIONS: partridge berry, ginger, black pepper

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Black cohosh is a native plant that is not abundant throughout the United States, but it can be common where it does occur regionally in eastern states. Growing this plant yourself is the best option for harvesting. You can also divide any tightly growing wild plants by their roots.

Only harvest this with an experienced wildcrafter, as the plant can be mistaken for doll's eyes, or baneberry (*Actaea pachypoda)*, which is toxic.

TRADITIONAL USES: Black cohosh is sometimes called bugbane because the leaves were once rubbed against people's legs to keep off biting flies. Though known today primarily as a gynecological medicine, it was once used by Indigenous peoples for a wide range of inflammatory conditions, including menstrual pain and cramping. A decoction made from the roots was also made into a gargle for sore throats and rheumatism. Rheumatism was treated with the steam of the decoction by holding the afflicted limb over a steaming cauldron.

It was also used generally to treat coughs and colds, bring on delayed menses, and soothe fussy babies. In emergency situations, black cohosh was used to treat snakebites, "for which purpose it [was] bruised and applied to the wound; and at the same time a little of the juice was to be taken internally."[1] Famous Southern folk herbalist Tommie Bass recommended making a syrup of the roots for curing a nagging cough and bronchitis. His recommended dosages were 1 teaspoon of dried root in a tea with 2 cups of water, steeped for 5 minutes, then strained. This tea was to be drunk cold several times a day. He always advised caution if one was pregnant in the first trimester, breastfeeding, heavily menstruating, or had a family history of female reproductive cancers.[2]

This powerful plant's magical uses are evident in its folk name among African Americans—black snakeroot. Hoodoo practitioners in the southern United States used the root as an amulet to ward off snakes, prevent snakebites, and otherwise keep oneself safe from harm. It was also used in knot magic, where six knots tied around a root were used to ward off harm. When mixed with valerian root and other powders, the root was used to remove unwanted renters or visitors from someone's home.

The eclectic physicians of the mid-nineteenth century used black cohosh for endometritis, amenorrhea, dysmenorrhea, menorrhagia, sterility, severe after-birth pains, and to encourage increased breast-milk production. In early American medicine, the root and rhizome were used to treat serious epidemic illnesses.

MODERN USES: Black cohosh is known as one of the most effective ways to herbally treat menstrual and menopausal discomfort. Fall-harvested roots are used conventionally to help relieve menstrual pain, cramping, irritability, and headaches. It is also used during menopause to treat symptoms such as hot flashes, skin-crawling sensations, depression, nervousness, anxiety, and insomnia.[3] It is still useful broadly for the nervous system and is commonly combined with St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum)* for nervousness.

Black cohosh is particularly useful for muscular pains in the back and thighs, shoulders, and neck. It also aids the easing of uterine pain in endometriosis, helps with postpartum depression, and can sometimes relieve pain in arthritis and rheumatism, as well as general inflammation. It has been used for meningitis after the acute symptoms have passed, for fibromyalgia, and for spasmodic coughs such as bronchitis, colds, and whooping cough.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

BLACK COHOSH TINCTURE

1:2, 80%: fresh root
1:5, 75%: dried root

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 5 to 30 drops three times daily.

BLACK COHOSH DECOCTION

1 teaspoon dried black cohosh root or 2 teaspoons fresh root
1 cup water

Place the root in a small saucepan, then add the water. Bring to a gentle simmer over low heat, cover, and simmer for 10 minutes. Strain and transfer the decoction to a small jar with a lid.

Take ½ cup of the decoction every 2 hours as needed, or 1 ½ total cups per day as a tonic dose.

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1 George Wood, *Vitalogy: Or, Encyclopedia of Health and Home, Adapted for Home and Family Use* (I.N. Reed, 1896).

2 Darryl Patton, *Mountain Medicine: The Herbal Remedies of Tommie Bass* (Natural Reader Press, 2004), 54.

3 Mark Blumenthal, ed., *The Complete German Commission E Monographs* (American Botanical Council, 2000), 22–27

6. BLACK-EYED SUSAN

RUDBECKIA HIRTA

Asteraceae family

CAUTION: *The seeds are considered poisonous, though more research is needed to determine how harmful they are. Do not take while pregnant or nursing.*

ORIGIN: A plant native to eastern North America.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: This relative of echinacea has a brilliant golden, sunlike composite flower with a reddish-brown center.

PART USED: flowers, leaves, roots

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: warming, tonifying, antiseptic, immunomodulating

TASTE: bitter

SUBSTITUTION: *Rudbeckia laciniata* root

TRADITIONAL USES: Almost all North American Indigenous people who lived within range of this plant—including the Cherokee, Potawatomi, Iroquois, Seminole, Shuswap, and Ojibwa—were working with it medicinally. The Cherokee, or ᎠᏂᏴᏫᏘ, folks call this plant "deer eye" or "little sun," depending on the species, in Tsalagi, the Cherokee language. Its roots have traditionally been used as a decoction to help with colds, flu, and worms in children among the Ojibwa and many the other nations.

Black-eyed susan root was also used as a wash for snakebites. The Menominee and Potawatomi nations use this plant to increase the flow of urine.[1] Tommie Bass, famous Southern folk herbalist, knew of it as a Potawotomi cold remedy and a bitter tonic. The root tea was also used as a general wash for cuts, scrapes, and wounds. In Appalachian and Southern folk medicine, the leaf tea was a general tonic.[2] An interesting point to note is that deer eye has a connection to buffalo; as the buffalo were killed in the western lands of this continent, it was said this flower traveled east with Indigenous migrations. European settlers and enslaved Africans in the South used the tea of this plant as a general cure-all.

Despite this plant's being native to the United States, its name bears the mark of colonization. There is an English settler legend that the name is drawn from a poem written by eighteenth-century dramatist John Gay, entitled "Sweet William's Farewell to Black-Eyed Susan." The poem was about how these wildflowers and the sweet william plant (*Dianthus barbatus*) bloom together.

MODERN USES: *Rudbeckia speciosa* has been studied for its immuno-stimulant properties and seems to be more effective than echinacea species, which are considered conventionally to be immune stimulating. While each species is slightly different in its chemical composition, it's promising that many of the rudbeckia species may be able to stand alongside or even contain more antimicrobial activity than previously expected.[3] Black-eyed susan works well as a gently immuno-stimulating tea or a decoction for colds and flus.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

BLACK-EYED SUSAN DECOCTION

1 tablespoon chopped black-eyed susan root
2 cups water

Place the chopped root in a medium saucepan and add the water. Bring to a simmer over low heat and simmer for 30 minutes.

Strain out the root and let the decoction cool, then pour into a glass jar. Close with the lid and store in the fridge 2 to 3 days.

Drink 1 cup of the decoction three times per day for acute symptoms.

BLACK-EYED SUSAN TINCTURE

1:2, 50%: fresh flowers, leaves, and roots
1:5, 50%: dried herb

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 30 to 60 drops three times a day for acute symptoms.

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1 Huron H. Smith, "Ethnobotany of the Forest Potawatomi Indians," *Bulletin of the Public Museum of the City of Milwaukee* 7 (1933): 1–230.

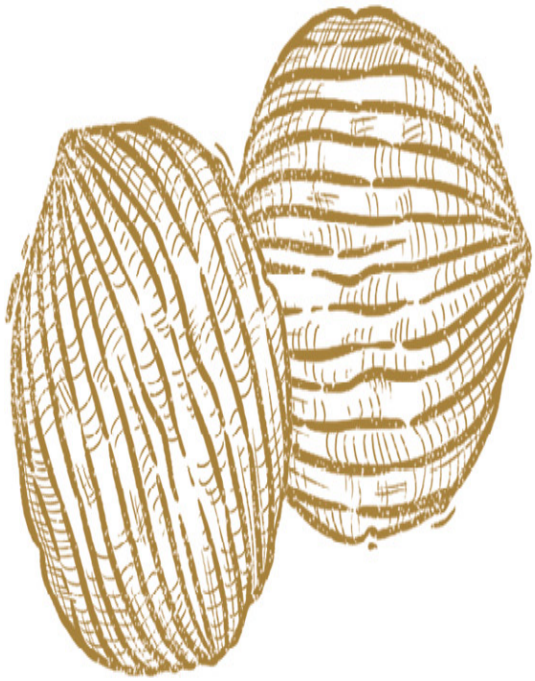
2 J. K. Crellin et al., *A Reference Guide to Medicinal Plants* (Duke University Press, 1990), 95–96.

3 Michael Moore, *Medicinal Plants of the Mountain West* (Museum of New Mexico Press, 1979), 60–62.

7. BLACK WALNUT

JUGLANS NIGRA

Juglandaceae family



CAUTION: *Do not take internally longer than two weeks at a time, as it can kill good gut bacteria. Do not take while pregnant.*

ORIGINS: Black walnut is one of the most valuable timber trees in North American forests. The black walnut has been growing in North America at least since the Pleistocene era, and it has a long history of use as a food and medicine source for First Nations people in North America and, later, the rest of North America's colonizing inhabitants. It is different from the English, or Persian, walnut (*Juglans regia*) that one sees commonly in grocery stores; it has a unique taste and smell.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Black walnut is a tree with a distinguished bark that has dark, deep ridges forming diamond-like patterns. The leaves are fragrant when crushed and have a pungent, almost citrus or spicy smell. They are divided leaves, meaning they are a large leaf made up of many leaflets, giving them a feather-like appearance. The nuts have dark brown hulls that are deeply fissured, containing a brown inner paper that conceals a cream-colored edible nut.

PART USED: hulls, leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: acrid, warming

TASTE: bitter, aromatic

SUBSTITUTIONS: berberine-containing herbs like Oregon grape root or barberry bark

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: The nuts that have fallen to the earth make this medicine easy to harvest. The tree is in relative abundance along the East Coast of North America, and harvesting the hulls of the nuts does not harm the tree.

TRADITIONAL USES: *Juglans* means "nut of Jupiter" in Latin, and some historians believe it refers to the god Jupiter's nethers. The nut may in fact refer to the "glans of Jupiter." This may account for the walnut's connection with

fertility and love in many ancient legends, such as the story of Carya and Dionysis. According to the myth, the god Dionysis fell in love with a daughter of Laconian King Dion while visiting his lands. When her elder sisters hid her from him, Dionysis turned them to rocks. Carya was turned into a walnut tree. In her honor, a temple to Artemis Caryatis was erected, featuring feminine carvings made from walnut wood, known later as Caryatids.[1] The ancient Greeks also stewed the walnuts and ate them to increase fertility.

In North America, the upper Great Lakes region provides archeological evidence of black-walnut consumption dating back to 2000 BCE. The peoples of the First Nations in Appalachia used black walnuts for a variety of things; the hulls were used to dye hides, baskets, and other materials, while the nutritious nuts were eaten in various ways and the leaves, bark, and hulls were used for medicine. They also tapped the trees for their sap, much like is done with maple trees. Some tribes introduced the black walnut to European colonists, among many other important wild food plants. These tribes also reportedly used the hulls and the potent chemical they contain, juglone, to stun fish in dammed creeks.[2]

Walnut hulls and leaves were used to treat fungal infections and parasitic issues throughout North America. Chewing the fresh leaves of the black walnut tree was a remedy for thrush, fungal issues, and sores in the mouth, while a tea or ointment made from green hulls was applied externally to treat cankers, sores, ringworm, and other skin infections. Leaf decoctions were used as antiseptic washes for wounds and sores, and leaves were applied to animals to prevent bug bites. Black walnut root bark was used by eclectic practitioners to treat irritations and inflammations of the intestines where diarrhea was present.[3]

MODERN USES: A tincture made from the hulls can be ingested in small doses as an antiparasitic, antifungal, blood-cleansing tonic. Externally, a decoction of the hulls is used for ringworm, scabies, cradle cap, and other fungal infections. A leaf decoction is used for vaginal candida overgrowth and itching. The hulls can also be made into a body powder by powdering them and mixing with cornstarch and berberine-containing herbs like barberry or Oregon grape. Use

this powder to help with yeast infections and fungal foot conditions. Just remember that when wet, the tea, tincture, and powder stain easily.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

BLACK WALNUT HULL TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh hull
1:5, 50%: dried leaves *or* 1:5, 65%: dried hulls

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 10 to 20 drops three times a day, straight or in a nice-tasting tea; try anise hyssop or ginger to help with the taste.

BLACK WALNUT DECOCTION

1 teaspoon finely chopped black walnut leaves or green hulls
1 cup water

Place the leaves or hulls in a small saucepan, then add the water, covering the plant completely. Bring to a simmer over low heat and simmer for 15 minutes.

Strain out the leaves or hulls and pour the decoction into a small jar. Lid and store in the fridge for up to 3 days.

Use the decoction as a warm compress or use to moisten a cotton ball to treat fungal infections two times daily until the condition improves.

Note: Use freely as an external medicine, but note that the liquid can stain light skin tones, fingernails, fabrics, and surfaces a greenish brown color.

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1 Diana Wells, *Lives of the Trees* (Algonquin Books, 2010), 332; Fred Hageneder, *The Meaning of Trees: Botany, History, Healing, Lore* (Chronicle Books, 2005), 114.

2 Nancy Jean Turner and Patrick von Aderkas, "Sustained by First Nations: European Newcomers' Use of Indigenous Plant Foods in Temperate North America," *Acta Societatis Botanicorum Poloniae* 81, no. 4 (2012): 295–315.

3 Patricia Kyristi Howell, *Medicinal Plants of the Southern Appalachians* (Boston Academic Publishing, 2006), 50.

8. BLACKBERRY

RUBUS SPP.

Rosaceae family

CAUTION: *Too much blackberry tea can cause constipation*.

ORIGINS: It is unclear exactly where this widespread plant originated, but it has roots in Asia, Europe, North Africa, and North and South America. There are many species of blackberry, some native to their respective continents and some troublesome invasives. Regardless of the species, they are all useful for food and medicine.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Blackberries have alternating toothed leaves with either three or five leaflets. The long, thorny arching brambles have five-petaled white flowers that become fruits that turn dark purple or black when ripe.

PART USED: leaves, immature and ripe fruit, roots, buds

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: astringent, cooling

TASTE: sour

SUBSTITUTIONS: other rose family fruits, for their astringency

TRADITIONAL USES: Blackberry tea or a decoction made from the roots and leaves has been used in Indigenous medicine for thousands of years. This powerfully astringent plant is useful for all conditions related to diarrhea/bloody flux and dysentery. The tannins make it especially helpful as a mouthwash for ulcers and sore throats. In Southern folk medicine, the addition of another tannin-rich root or bark of a native tree, the persimmon, helps make a more powerful brew to address conditions that call for astringency. Blackberry leaves were also once used as a general tonic for weakness. As a topical wash, they were applied to sores and inflammations of the skin.

The Western ancients deemed both the fruit and the flowers of the bramble effective against bites of serpents; it was believed that the qualities of this bush were so astringent that even its young shoots, when eaten as a salad, would fasten teeth that were loose. In Great Britain today, blackberry is the subject of folk

taboos. In a story from biblical tradition, it is said that Saint Michael cast the devil out of heaven, and the devil had the misfortune to land on a bramble bush upon his swift arrival on earth. It is still said that on Saint Michael's Day (September 29), the devil curses the bramble bush by stamping or spitting on its berries to make them sour and inedible.

Other species in the *Rubus* genus have been used in folk medicine around the world. In Australia, Aboriginal peoples used the decoction of raspberry leaves as a remedy for dysentery and bowel troubles. In Hawaii, the native raspberry species (*R. hawaiiensis*) was called "akala." A mix of half dried akala stems and naupaka (*Scaevola* spp.*)* are used for *kepia* (dandruff).[1] Ashes of akala stem and ripe he'i (papaya, *Carica papaya*) are ingested as a treatment for *umauma naha* (burning effect in the chest) and *hoaoa lua'i* (stomach ailment with vomiting).

MODERN USES: A tea made from the leaves or a decoction made from the roots is a wonderful remedy for loose stools and moderate diarrhea. The fruits are extremely rich in antioxidants and are useful nutritional medicine. The leaves are not often used despite their wonderful medicine; they could be used much like raspberry leaves as a tonic and mineral-rich tea to help replenish the body after menstruation. The leaves are astringent and abundant where the plant is invasive, making them an excellent choice for a tea wash to treat cuts, bruises, sores, and small tears in the skin. The cool or preferably cold leaf tea can also be used dabbed on burns. It also makes an excellent sitz bath for hemorrhoids, vaginal irritations, and anal fissures.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

BLACKBERRY TEA

1 teaspoon dried blackberry leaves, dried root powder, or green fruits
1 cup freshly boiled water
Honey (optional)

Place the blackberry leaves in a glass jar. Add the hot water and steep for 30 minutes. Strain and drink by the tablespoon for diarrhea as often as needed. Store any excess in the fridge for up the 3 days.

BLACKBERRY CORDIAL

8 quarts ripe blackberries
1 cup honey or sugar
Brandy (optional)

Place the blackberries in a large saucepan or stockpot and put over low heat. Simmer for 15 minutes, stirring and gently smashing the berries carefully with a large, preferably wooden, spoon. Lay a clean muslin cloth in a large bowl and pour the hot berries into it. Bring the corners of the cloth together at the top, tie together, then hang the bundle above the bowl and let the berries drip their juice into the bowl overnight.

In the morning, squeeze the bag to get any final juice out. Pour the juice that has collected in the bowl into a large saucepan and add the honey or sugar. Place over low heat and gently simmer for 1 hour, until reduced and thickened.

Either pour the hot liquid into pint jars and process for 30 minutes in a hot-water bath, or store the jars in the fridge. (Alternatively, you could add 1 cup of a good brandy per 2 cups of blackberry liquid to make a shelf-stable alcoholic version; just watch for mold and keep it out of direct sunlight and use within 6 months.)

Take 1 to 3 tablespoons of the cordial for diarrhea or gastric upset, or drink as a refreshing beverage mixed with mineral water and a squeeze of lemon.

BLACKBERRY FEVER OXYMEL

In early recipes, this mixture would be canned in a hot-water bath for later use; however, by fermenting it in the fridge, you ensure the honey and vinegar remain alive and probiotic.

1 quart fresh blackberries
4 cups organic apple cider vinegar (or other vinegar with at least 5% acidity)
About 1 quart raw honey

Place the blackberries in a large saucepan and gently warm them over low heat until the juices begin to be released. Do not let boil. Allow to cool slightly, until just warm, then add the vinegar. Mix and mash the berries with a large wooden spoon, releasing more juice and blending with the vinegar. Pour the mixture into large jar or ceramic crock. Cover and allow to sit for 1 week.

Strain the mix through muslin into a large bowl. Measure the amount of liquid and add the same amount of honey, then stir together. Transfer to a large glass bottle with a pop top and allow to slowly ferment in the refrigerator for up to a year.

Take 1 to 2 tablespoons at a time as often as desired for colds, flu, and gastric distress.

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1 A. K. Chock, “Hawaiian Ethnobotanical Studies I: Native Food and Beverage Plants,” *Economic Botany* 22, no. 3 (1968): 221–38.

9. BLUE VERVAIN, SIMPLER'S JOY, SWAMP VERBENA, BLUE VERBENA

VERBENA HASTATA

Verbenaceae family

CAUTION: *Very large doses can result in sweating, vomiting, and even miscarriage.*

ORIGINS: Native to North America, the Mediterranean, and Asia, the vervains include 250 species around the world.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Blue vervain has many small purple flowers that appear candelabra-like in their branched growth habit on two 5-inch-long spikes. They have narrow, lance-shaped leaves with toothed margins.

PART USED: aerial parts in flower

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: astringent, bitter, diaphoretic, styptic, vulnerary, cooling

TASTE: bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: milky oats, passionflower, rose

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This plant can be found along ponds and in other damp areas. In midsummer, when the plant is fully in flower, you can harvest it down to its first set of leaves; much like mint family plants, it will grow new shoots. It is a native plant and should be treated with caution to avoid over-harvesting. This plant is also lovely and quite easy to grow, given enough water.

TRADITIONAL USES: The Dakota word for this plant means "medicine," and the plant was used as a spring tonic decoction by the Dakota to strengthen the organs. The Cherokee used it for a wide variety of things, such as a cold remedy to sweat out a fever owing to its diaphoretic properties, and as a root decoction for bowel issues and gastrointestinal pain. The Chippewa used the dried flowers as snuff for nosebleeds.[1] The roots were also used traditionally by Iroquoians as a decoction for every ache; it is also said in their folklore that the aboveground parts could be used to cause an obnoxious person to leave.[2]

Vervain (*V. officinalis*) was a sacred plant to the ancient Romans, used in rituals and as a remedy for respiratory illnesses. Pliny the Elder noted the magical uses of this plant in 77 CE—it was allegedly used to fortune-tell, obtain wishes, banish fevers, win friends, and cure diseases. Blue vervain was also sacred to the ancient Celts, and residues of it have been found in settlement excavations from Neolithic times.[3]

Black folks in North America traditionally boiled blue vervain roots and stalks in vinegar and applied that to rheumatic areas.[4] Southern folk herbalist Tommie Bass added blue vervain to formulas for coughs and colds to serve as a sedative for the bronchioles.[5]

MODERN USES: Blue vervain is a safe, nonsedating nervine that makes a fine long-term tonic for anxiety and feelings of being overwhelmed.[6] It can be used similarly as *V. offincinalis,* the latter known simply as vervain in Europe. Both varieties varieties are useful for relieving anxiety, tension, and general emotional agitation.

Blue vervain is particularly relaxing. It is helpful to those who feel tightly wound, especially if they also deal with a lot of anger, and struggle to emotionally open up. It is also a diaphoretic and also helpful with relieving the shoulder and neck tension that can lead to headaches, especially when used along with skullcap (*Scutellaria laterfolia*).[7]

This herb does not just act on the nervous system; it is also helpful externally. A poultice made with blue vervain can help burns. The tea made with blue vervain is bitter, so many prefer to use the herb as a tincture, especially when blended with tastier herbs that are also nervine and digestive like rose, tulsi, cardamom, oat straw, and passionflower.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

BLUE VERVAIN TINCTURE

1:3, 80%: fresh plant
1:4, 50%: dried plant

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 10 to 20 drops three to four times daily.

Caution: *It's best to not exceed ½ teaspoon dose taken four times daily.*

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1 Frances Densmore, "Uses of Plants by the Chippewa Indians," SI-BAE Annual Report #44:273-379 (1928), 356.

2 James William Herrick, "Iroquois Medical Botany (PhD diss., State University of New York, Albany, 1977), 422.

3 C. Wagner et al., "Celtic Provenance in Traditional Herbal Medicine of Medieval Wales and Classical Antiquity," *Frontiers of Pharmacology* 11 (February 2020): 105.

4 William Grimé, ed., *Ethno-Botany of the Black Americans* (Reference Publications, 1979), 190.

5 Darryl Patton, *Mountain Medicine: The Herbal Remedies of Tommie Bass* (Natural Reader Press, 2004), 103.

6 7Song of the Northeastern School of Botanical Medicine.

7 CoreyPine Shane, *Southeast Medicinal Plants* (Timber Press, 2021), 77.

10. BONESET, AGUE WEED, FEVERWEED, THOROUGHWORT

EUPATORIUM PERFOLIATUM

Asteraceae family

CAUTION: *Contains pyrrolizidine alkaloids. In consistent high doses, it can and often does cause serious kidney and liver damage. Large doses, especially of hot strong tea, can cause vomiting and diarrhea. It should not be used during pregnancy, when breastfeeding, if you have liver disease, or when your liver function is compromised.*

ORIGINS: This perennial plant is native to North America. Boneset can be found from the northeast and upper Midwest to northern Florida and westward to Kentucky. This beautiful white flowering plant features fuzzy leaves that appear to be pierced by the plant's stem through the opposite leaves which grow together. This lends boneset its species name, which means "perfoliate." It grows on the margins of the forest; waterways are also often dotted with this lovely plant.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Boneset is easy to distinguish, with its fuzzy, opposite leaves that have no stalks. The leaves are fused to the stem, giving it the look of having been "pierced." The flowers are small, white, and disklike.

PART USED: aerial and flowering parts

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: expectorant, diaphoretic, tonic, antiviral, immuno-stimulating, antibiotic, analgesic, emetic, laxative

TASTE: bitter, acrid

SUBSTITUTIONS: yarrow

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This is a somewhat abundant perennial native plant that is easy to grow in home gardens. Cut just the top of the plant to allow for continued growth and new sprouts.

TRADITIONAL USES: Boneset was a traditional medicine for fevers and a favorite bitter tonic in American folk medicine at the turn of the century. It was extensively used for "intermittens," or fevers that would come and go—a

common symptom of tuberculosis. The name *boneset* most likely refers to the ways in which it was used in Indigenous folk medicine to relieve the aching of bones that often accompanies feverish conditions, especially with influenza. Small doses of boneset tea were used as a digestive aid owing to its bitter taste.

It was also an important medicinal herb for enslaved peoples in the American South during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The warm tea was given for chills and fevers, as well as for pain in the bones from arthritis and rheumatism. In the southern United States, boneset was often mixed with maidenhair fern, sumac, gum tree, rabbit tobacco, and other herbs, again for fevers and flu. Breakbone fever, also known as dengue fever, was another condition this plant often helped soothe, especially during the nineteenth century.

In European folk medicine, boneset has been used internally to aid in healing broken bones, owing to how the leaf's piercing by the stem is reminiscent of one's own bones.[1] While this assignment of herbs to treatments is purely visual land not always right, it is easy to understand how the natural world and its mysterious ways could be interpreted in this manner.

MODERN USES: Boneset is a time-honored antiviral herb used to soothe body aches and acute viral infections. It is often paired with echinacea and other immune-stimulating herbs; its diaphoretic, or sweat-inducing action, helps break a fever. It is especially useful along with yarrow and elderflower, two other wonderful diaphoretics.[2] It is also useful in breaking up mucus and respiratory congestion.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

HOT OR COLD BONESET TEA

A hot tea of the leaves and aerial parts is used as a diaphoretic. The cold tea is used as a gentle laxative and for tonifying the bowels.

1 teaspoon dried boneset leaves, or 1 tablespoon fresh leaves
1 cup freshly boiled water

Place the leaves in a glass jar. Add the hot water and steep for 30 minutes. Strain and enjoy immediately; if cold tea is preferred, allow the tea to cool to room temperature. Store any

excess in the fridge up to 3 days.

Caution: *The tea is bitter and may make you vomit if taken in excess.*

BONESET TINCTURE

1:2, 50%: fresh plant leafs and flowers
1:5, 50%: dried herbs

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Use interchangeably with an infusion; however, do not sweeten if the digestive aspects are what you seek. For *respiratory conditions*, take 10 to 20 drops three to four times a day. (This is a conservative dose; some take up to ½ teaspoon three times a day with no ill effects.) For *digestion*, take 10 to 20 drops in water after a meal.

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1 Judith Sumner, *Plants in the Civil War: A Botanical History* (McFarland, 2022), 93.

2 CoreyPine Shane, *Southeast Medicinal Plants* (Timber Press, 2021).

11. BURDOCK

ARCTIUM SPP.

Asteraceae family
Other names: gobō (Japanese), niúbàng (牛蒡) (Chinese), u-eong (우엉) (Korean)

CAUTION: *Some people get contact dermatitis when handling this plant.*

ORIGINS: There are a number of burdock species, a plant that originated in Eurasia. *Arctium lappa* is native from northern Europe to northeast Asia, including parts of northern India. Today it is grown in Japan, Taiwan, and China as a food crop. This biennial plant grows a long taproot and is infamous for the small hooks on its seed pods, a bane to fluffy animals and woolen-clad humans alike. The genus name *Arctium* originates from the Greek word *arktos*, which means "bear." This most likely refers to its bearlike hairy burs.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Burdock is hard to miss, with its large, wavy-edged leaves that have wooly undersides. They all emerge from a central growth point and have a stout stem with many purple, thistle-like flowers that dry to a brown burr that clings to all passersby!

PART USED: whole plant

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: cooling, bitter, alterative, tonic, blood cleansing, moist

TASTE: bitter, sweet

SUBSTITUTIONS: chickweed, cleavers, other nutritive cooling herbs

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Burdock is an abundant nonnative and grows along roadsides and in disturbed areas. It is also easy to cultivate.

TRADITIONAL USES: Burdock is a nutritive, humble herb with a mysterious history, and its effects are not entirely understood despite its modern popularity. Burdock has held a special place in folklore and medicine wherever it grows. The twelfth-century German mystic nun and healer Hildegard von Bingen prescribed burdock to treat cancerous tumors. From there, the herb's reputation as a tumor treatment spread to Russia, China, India, and the Americas. Burdock

was used as an ingredient in alternative cancer treatments until the late 1950s. It is now best known as a detoxifying, nutritive, and purifying root tonic tea.

Burdock also has an association with storms and bears in western and northern Europe. It was once considered sacred to the god of thunder, Thor, a Nordic god known as the "heavenly bear" owing to his hirsute and fierce nature. This belief persisted into the Middle Ages among Germanic and Celtic clans, and burdock was placed on gables to protect against lightning and "the machinations of giants." Burdock was also called *Toennersbladden* ("thunder leaf") in northern Germany.[1] The tea of burdock root was brewed and used as a hair wash throughout Europe in the Middle Ages, perhaps because this plant is large and quite gently fuzzy.

In the seventeenth century, an English astrological herbalist named Nicholas Culpeper assigned burdock under the rule of Venus. He recommended the juice of burdock leaves as a diuretic, while a tea made of the seeds was used for kidney stones. In western European folk medicine, burdock is seen as a blood purifying plant because of its stimulating effects on the gallbladder. As such, it was also used to treat venereal disease across western Europe, especially the skin eruptions and scrofula associated with advanced syphilis.

MODERN USES: Today, burdock is often taken as a nutritive tonic decoction, nourishing the skin owing to its effects on the liver and gallbladder. By supporting the liver and gallbladder, and acting as a mild diuretic and laxative, burdock helps cleanse and strengthen many of the body systems. Externally, the leaves and roots can be gently cooked to make a poultice that helps treat boils, skin irritations, and cuts, as well as burns and sores. There is some antifungal action in the whole-plant tincture as well that can be used both internally and externally.

Burdock really is an alterative tonic, as it helps the body more efficiently and effectively use and eliminate waste. The root is also rich in inulin and acts as a prebiotic. In Japan and other parts of eastern Asia, burdock is cultivated as a food and is included in nourishing soups and as a fermented vegetable. Burdock is high in cobalt, dietary fiber, phosphorous, potassium, sodium, tin, vitamins A

and C, and zinc.[2] The young stalks can be steamed and eaten if peeled from first-year plants.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

BURDOCK ROOT DECOCTION

2 tablespoons chopped burdock root
4 cups water

Place the burdock root in a small saucepan, then add the water and place over low heat. Simmer for 30 minutes. Strain and transfer to a large glass jar with a lid, cool and store in the fridge 2 to 3 days.

Drink throughout the day as a tonic or use topically as a hair rinse or soak for skin irritations.

DIGESTIVE BURDOCK ROOT PICKLES

1 cup peeled burdock root
6 garlic cloves, finely minced
½ cup chopped wild onions or green onions (green and white parts)
1 teaspoon mustard seeds
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
2 tablespoons salt
1 large green cabbage leaf

Combine the burdock root, garlic, onions, mustard seeds, and pepper in a medium bowl. Sprinkle with the salt and mix well using your hands. Pack the mixture into a glass canning jar and mash down until liquid is drawn out of the vegetables and lightly covers them. Lay the fresh cabbage leaf over the top to keep the pickling vegetable submerged. Lid loosely to allow gasses to escape and ferment 4 to 5 days at room temperature. (Alternatively, use an airlock jar lid to help with this process.)

Place the jar in the fridge for storage and watch as the flavor continues to improve and develop. Enjoy in small amounts at first and increase as digestion allows.

Caution: *Sometimes, if not used to eating fermented foods, an upset stomach may occur, so always try new foods in small amounts first.*

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1 Wolf D. Storl, *A Curious History of Vegetables: Aphrodisiacal and Healing Properties, Folk Tales, Garden Tips, and Recipes* (North Atlantic Books, 2016), 275.

2 Mark Pedersen, *Nutritional Herbology: A Reference Guide to Herbs* (Wendell W. Whitman, 1998).

12. CALENDULA

CALENDULA OFFICINALIS

Asteraceae family

CAUTION: *None known.*

ORIGINS: There are 15 to 20 species in the calendula genus. They originated in the Canary Islands and grow throughout the Mediterranean region and east to Iran. They also were found in southwestern Asia.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Calendula is a low-growing bushy plant covered in fine hairs. The stems are topped with brilliant orange flowers that look much like their cousins, the daisies.

PART USED: flowers, leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: cooling, anti-inflammatory, antispasmodic, astringent, vulnerary, antiseptic, tonifying, detoxifying

TASTE: bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: lavender, plantain

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This beautiful sunny plant is easily grown in abundance in a garden plot or pot. When wildcrafting flowers, remember that when all the flowers are picked, the plant will not produce seed, so leave enough flowers per plant to ensure a good crop of viable seed to continue the next generation onward due to the fact it is a self-seeding annual. Where they occur as a native plant, remember every flower picked will never go to seed, so always leave a large number of flowers when foraging so the stand continues.

TRADITIONAL USES: There are many species of calendula, and many types were used historically for medicine around the world. In Ayurvedic and Unani systems of medicine, calendula leaves and flowers are used for their anti-inflammatory, antiepileptic, antimicrobial, and fever-reducing properties.[1] In Morocco, the flowers were traditionally used to treat infected wounds and for

general inflammation, as well as for a diabetic remedy. In Iranian folk medicine, the flowers were used historically for gallstones and kidney stones.[2]

In Sardinia and other areas of Italy, calendula was used as an antiinflammatory and as a folk cancer treatment. Englishman John Gerard, in his 1597 *Herbal*, mentioned its uses as a strengthener of the heart and as a remedy against poisons and "pestilent agues" or fevers.[3] He also recommended it for watery or red infected eyes. The plant was employed in the American Civil War to treat wounds and as a remedy for measles, smallpox, and jaundice.[4]

MODERN USES: Calendula is one of the chief remedies for skin problems. This sunshine-like flower is a well-known and safe medicine for children and adults. It is excellent as a tea wash, oil, or cream for sunburns, diaper rash, chafing, and much more. Calendula, in the form of a poultice or salve made from the flower, is a great herb for nursing mothers, as it can help with sore, cracked nipples. It is also recommended for conditions like cradle cap in children and other skin irritations. Calendula is antifungal and soothing for sensitive issues like athlete's foot or jock itch.

Calendula is also useful internally for digestive issues and disorders of the gut. As a tea, the flowers are used to treat gastritis, gas, bloating, ulcerative conditions, and stomach ulcers in general, as well as inflammatory conditions of the gut. They are also soothing to the stomach lining and tissues of the internal mucosa. The tea makes a great sitz bath for vaginal or anal itching, or for irritations resulting from intercourse, birth, or other trauma to the urogenital tract.

The detoxifying properties of calendula are best celebrated by the skin. Calendula tea not only helps the gut, which in turn improves almost every other function of the body, but it also helps the liver and gallbladder. Gently warmed tea is a great wash for conjunctivitis and eye infections, and it makes a comforting compress for sties when applied via a soaked cloth. Issues with elimination in the liver often present themselves in the skin, which makes calendula a great medicine alongside herbs like burdock for chronic cystic acne, skin eruptions, and blemishes.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

GUT-HEALING CALENDULA TEA

1 tablespoon dried marshmallow root
2 cups cold water
1 tablespoon dried calendula flowers
2 cups freshly boiled water

Place the marshmallow root in a medium bowl and add the cold water. Cover with a clean cloth and place in the fridge overnight. In the morning, strain and set aside.

Place the calendula flowers in a large measuring cup and then pour in the hot water. Steep for 30 minutes, then strain. Mix the marshmallow and calendula tea in a glass jar, cover with the lid, and store in the fridge 2 to 3 days.

Drink 1 cup of the tea three times a day for IBS, ulcers, and food poisoning.

CALENDULA FLOWER OIL

1 cup gently dried calendula flowers
3 cups oil (see the oil-making section on page 35)

Place the calendula flowers in the top of a double boiler and add the oil. Add water to the bottom pot. Put the double boiler over medium-low heat and simmer for about 3 hours. (Avoid getting any water into your oil mixture.) Strain and transfer to a glass jar with a lid or any other lidded glass container you choose. The oil lasts about a year if kept in a cool, dark place.

For a more passive method, fill a glass canning jar with the flowers and cover them with the oil. Cover the jar with the lid and then allow the flowers to infuse for 1 month in a cool, dark place. When the oil is fragrant and golden, strain it and transfer it back to the glass jar for storage.

Use this oil on skin irritations, as a massage oil, or for cradle cap or on intimate areas for healing small abrasions or chafe.

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1 K. Kasiram et al., "Antifungal Activity of *Calendula officinalis*," *Indian Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences* 62 (November–December 2000): 464–66.

2 A. Ghorbani, "Studies on Pharmaceutical Ethnobotany in the Region of Turkmen Sahra, North of Iran (Part 1): General Results," *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 102, no. 1 (2005): 56–58.

3 John Gerard, *The Herbal or General History of Plants: The Complete 1633 Edition* (Dover, 2015).

4 Rosalind Northcote, *The Book of Herbs* (J. Lane, 1912).

13. CALIFORNIA POPPY

ESCHSCHOLZIA CALIFORNICA

Papaveraceae family

CAUTION: *Do not combine with other sedatives or painkillers without caution, as it can enhance their effects. Use caution when driving or operating machinery if taking high doses. Do not use during pregnancy.*

ORIGINS: The California poppy is native to the western United States. It grows from Baja California Sur north to Washington State, and from the Pacific coastline east to parts of the Sonoran Desert and the Great Basin.[1] There are most likely 12 different native species in the *Eschscholzia* genus in southwestern United States, and they often hybridize, which can make them difficult to identify.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: A short-statured, brilliantly golden, cuplike flowering plant with four or five petals without sepals. The foliage is feathery and bluish green, appearing almost wild carrot-like at a distance.

PART USED: aerial parts

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: anxiolytic, cooling, drying, analgesic, anodyne, antispasmodic, hypnotic, nervine, sedative

TASTE: bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: passionflower

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: It is illegal to gather California poppy in California, but luckily it can be grown in gardens with some ease. It grows in a wide variety of climates and also grows nicely in a pot. California poppies are considered invasive in Tennessee, so be sure to always check before planting any new plant whether or not it is controlled in your region. If gathering in the wild, take care as the flowers can accumulate heavy metals if growing along roadsides, near old houses, or by construction sites.

TRADITIONAL USES: The young leaves were a traditional food for many California Indigenous nations, including the Luiseño, Mendocino, and Neeshenam tribes.[2] The juice of the roots was used historically as a pain-relieving medicine by the Mendocino for headaches, stomachaches, and as a wash for sores, as well as for toothache pain and as an emetic.[3] In Pomo traditional medicine, it was used to dry up milk for lactating mothers.[4] In Costanoan Indigenous communities, California poppy flowers were laid under children's beds to help with sleep.[5] There are many more stories and ways to work with this plant in the native communities where it originated. Unfortunately, this special plant is threatened by overharvesting and habitat loss in its native range.

MODERN USES: It is a valuable, less hypnotic poppy family member that excels at aiding sleep, easing restlessness, and soothing anxiety. In smaller doses, California poppy is generally more useful as an anxiolytic, while at higher doses it works as a sedative and pain reliever.[6] This herb is helpful with insomnia, depression, anxiety, and pain. It is especially helpful for those with shaky nerves or people who feel thrown off balance. When feeling raw and angry, shaky and unsure, a mixture with milky oats and motherwort in a tincture blend is taken in small doses

While it is related to the opium poppy, the California poppy does not have the addictive pull that opium has. You can even turn to this herb, alongside professional help, to ease off opiates if experiencing addiction. The herb is helpful for spasmodic pains and afflictions like coughs, cramps, and back pains that involve spasm.[7]

California poppy also has helpful analgesic properties that make it a safe option for pain relief for older folks, children, and those who cannot do opiates. Children who are having a hard time settling for bed can have a small dose of the tea with honey to help them calm down.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

California Poppy Tincture

1:2, 95%: fresh aerial parts
1:4, 60%: dried herb

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 1 to 3 dropperfuls of the tincture three to six times a day.

Caution: *Larger doses will be more sedating—be careful if driving.*

CALIFORNIA POPPY INFUSION

1 teaspoon dried California poppy flowers
1 cup freshly boiled water

Place the poppy flowers in a glass jar. Add the hot water and steep for 30 minutes. Strain and take 1 cup of the tea at bedtime to aid with sleep, or 1 cup up to three times a day for pain or other uses.[8]

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1 C. Smith, *Plant Guide for California Poppy (Eschscholzia californica)* (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2011).

2 Daniel E. Moerman, *Native American Food Plants: An Ethnobotanical Dictionary* (Timber Press, 2010).

3 V. K. Chestnut, "Plants Used by the Indians of Mendocino County, California" (Mendocino County Historical Society, 1902).

4 Jennie Goodrich and Claudia Lawson, *Kashaya Pomo Plants* (American Indian Studies Center, University of California, 1980), 94.

5 Barbara R. Bocek, "Ethnobotany of Costanoan Indians, California, Based on Collections by John P. Harrington," *Economic Botany* 38, no. 2 (1984): 240–55.

6 A. Rolland et al., "Behavioural Effects of the American Traditional Plant *Eschscholzia californica*: Sedative and Aanxiolytic Properties." *Planta Medica* 57, no. 3 (1991): 212–16.

7 David Hoffmann, *Medical Herbalism: The Science and Practice of Herbal Medicine* (Inner Traditions/Bear & Co., 2003).

8 Michael Tierra, *The Way of Herbs* (Pocket Books, 1998).

14. CARDAMOM

ELETTERIA CARDAMOMUM

Zingiberaceae family

CAUTION: *May aggravate gallstone issues. Not to be taken as medicine in pregnancy. Excessive cardamom intake may interact with anticoagulants, antidepressants, aspirin, antiplatelet drugs, and HIV, liver, gallstone, and irritable bowel syndrome medicines.*

ORIGINS: This is one of the oldest spices in the world, native to Sri Lanka, Burma, Bangladesh, and India.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Cardamom is a tropical plant that grows swordlike leaves on stems that resemble cane.

PART USED: seed pods

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: aromatic, pungent, warming, digestive, antispasmodic, carminative, anti-inflammatory

TASTE: sweet, spicy

SUBSTITUTIONS: ginger

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This plant is generally tended as cultivated, meaning it is difficult to find in the wild. If found in the wild, be mindful: the pods are seeds that eventually make more cardamom!

TRADITIONAL USES: Traditionally, cardamom was used as a digestive, as well as for circulatory issues like cardiovascular disease, epilepsy, and even headaches throughout India. The seeds were also chewed to freshen the breath and combat chronic breath issues. In Tibetan traditional medicine, it was used for fever in combination with other warming and bitter herbs.[1] In Thailand, it was used for digestive issues as well. In the Arab world, cardamom is added to coffee as a stimulating beverage and as an aphrodisiac. These uses persist today. The ancient Romans used the seed pods during feasts and festivities to deal with the pain and digestive upset caused by excesses of overeating.[2]

MODERN USES: Cardamom, aside from being a delicious spice, is a wonderful digestive. It is helpful with painful gas and bloating and can also help relieve stomach pains and cramps. It is a great general digestive with its delicious and warming taste. Cardamom can be made into cordials and tinctures to take before eating to stimulate the appetite and increase digestion's effectiveness. If someone is struggling with low appetite or nausea, this herb is great for warming up the stomach.[3]

Cardamom is a wonderful respiratory remedy for conditions like mild asthma and bronchitis, excessive mucus, or coughing. The seeds can also be chewed to freshen bad breath. Cardamom is stimulating to the circulation and is a famous historical aphrodisiac. You can literally spice up your night!

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

CARDAMON TINCTURE

1:5, 60%: dried seed pods

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 20 drops three times a day for indigestion, coughs, mucus, gas, and bloating.

CARDAMOM MEDICINAL CHAI TEA

Chai tea is a beautiful way to ingest cardamom for help with digestion or a respiratory illness. Add other herbs, such as cinnamon or clove, if you desire to increase the medicinal effects.

5 cardamom pods, crushed
2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger
1 tablespoon chopped fresh orange peel
4 cups milk of your choice or water
Sprinkle of crushed black peppercorns
Sugar or honey (optional)

Place the cardamom, ginger, orange peel, milk, and peppercorns in a medium saucepan over medium heat and bring to a gentle simmer, then simmer for 10 minutes. Strain and sweeten to taste with sugar or honey while still hot, if desired. Stir well and serve immediately or save in the fridge for later.

Enjoy the tea as a pleasurable beverage, a digestive aid, or for help with colds and flu.

CARDAMOM APHRODISIAC INFUSED WINE

3 cups dry red wine

1 teaspoon crushed cardamom seeds
½ orange peel
1 star anise

Place the wine, cardamom, orange peel, and star anise in a medium saucepan over medium heat and warm until steaming. Reduce the heat and gently warm for 30 minutes, until steaming hot but not boiling.

Let cool briefly, then strain and serve immediately or pour into a 1-quart glass canning jar or bottle with a pop top and store in the fridge for up to 6 months. Take by the warmed cupful to inspire the passions.

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1 Karta Purkh, Singh Khalsa, et al., *The Way of Ayurvedic Herbs: The Most Complete Guide to Natural Healing and Health with Traditional Ayurvedic Herbalism* (Lotus Press, 2008).

2 David Osborn, "Cardamom," Greek Medicine (blog), n.d., http://www.greekmedicine.net/A_Greek_and_Unani_Herbal/herb.php?id=24.

3 Sharoi Marie Tilgner, *Herbal Medicine: From the Heart of the Earth* (Wise Acres, 2020), 64.

15. CATNIP

NEPETA CATARIA

Lamiaceae family

CAUTION: *Catnip is generally considered safe.*

ORIGINS: Catnip is native to China, the Middle East, central Asia, southern and eastern Europe, the Mediterranean region, and North Africa.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Catnip resembles other mints, in that it has opposite, pointed triangular leaves with large, simple toothed margins. It has a strong smell unique to itself and is covered in very fine hairs, which give it a delightful velvety feel. It has small, soft pink to purple, lipped flowers.

PART USED: aerial parts

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: cooling, sedative, relaxant, diaphoretic, digestive stimulant

TASTE: pungent, bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: passionflower, linden, chamomile

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This plant is generally grown in North American gardens as a nonnative. It spreads easily, so it's best to grow it in a container or harvest it frequently.

TRADITIONAL USES: A few species of catnip are part of traditional medicine and used extensively in the Himalayan regions of India, Pakistan, Nepal, China, Turkey, and Iran. They are especially useful for coughs and colds and as a digestive in these regions, among many other uses.[1] Medicines in the mint family like catnip, sage, and peppermint (*Mentha* spp.) were and still are considered nervines, or medicines that help soothe frazzled nerves, based on nineteenth-century ideas about the stomach's connection with nerve disorders.

Catnip tea is the old tried-and-true remedy for fretful children with colic who simply will not settle down to sleep. It was used to relieve gas and soothe both adults and children with stomachaches. It also served as a nervine for anxious

stomachaches. The tea was also used for menstrual headaches and to promote sweating in colds and fevers, primarily in Appalachian and Southern American folk medicine. It was traditionally used as a wash for hives, especially for children and for measles. Catnip is abundant and easy to grow, making it a staple in folk medicine everywhere it prospers.

MODERN USES: The uses of catnip in modern folk herbalism have not changed much, as it is such an effective and accessible medicine. Most folks know it as an herb to give cats that encourages them to play and go wild! Despite its effects on cats, catnip tea and tincture are wonderful remedies that aid humans with indigestion, gas, and anxiety-induced stomachaches. It generally acts as a gentle sedative. Catnip tea, when coupled with a hot bath, is a fine remedy to break a fever and bring on a good sweat.

Catnip tea is helpful for heartburn as well. Situational anxiety and panic are soothed by catnip tea, especially when mixed with other nervines like linden, chamomile, milky oats, and lemon balm.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

CATNIP SLEEP TONIC

Herbalist Tommie Bass developed this sleep tonic. Tommie lived near Lookout Mountain, Alabama, and spent his long life in the early twentieth century wildcrafting and making herbal medicines for all members of his diverse community in the Southern American folk medicine tradition. He was taught by Aunt Molly Kirby, a renowned Black herbalist and midwife. One of Tommie's popular mixtures was catnip, maypop (passionflower) leaves, skullcap, sage and peach leaves, and sometimes bay laurel leaves, which he used specifically for nervous headaches, rattled nerves, and stubborn insomnia.[2]

1 teaspoon dried catnip
1 teaspoon dried maypop
½ teaspoon dried skullcap
¼ teaspoon dried sage
5 fresh peach leaves, finely chopped
About 4 cups freshly boiled water

Place the catnip, maypop, skullcap, sage, and peach leaves in a 1-quart glass jar with a lid. Pour in the boiling water, cover, and steep for 20 minutes. Strain the mixture. Pour into a clean jar, cover, and store in the fridge up to 3 days.

Drink the tea by the cupful dose throughout the evening in the hours leading up to bedtime.

CATNIP TEETHING ICE POPS FOR BABY

You can also add chamomile to this blend if you'd like to have further help with upset tummies and colic.

1 teaspoon dried catnip
2 cups freshly boiled water
Sweetener of choice (optional; see caution)

Place the catnip in a glass jar and add the boiling water. Let steep for 30 minutes. Strain and add sweetener, if desired. Let the liquid cool to room temperature, then pour into ice pop molds and freeze.

Caution: *Honey is not safe for infants under one year old.*

CATNIP TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh leaves and flowers
1:5, 55%: dried herb

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take half a dropperful to 1 teaspoon three times a day.

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1 R. K. Joshi et al., "Himalayan Aromatic Medicinal Plants: A Review of Their Ethnopharmacology, Volatile Phytochemistry, and Biological Activities," *Medicines* 3, no. 1 (2016): 6.

2 Darryl Patton, *Mountain Medicine: The Herbal Remedies of Tommie Bass* (Natural Reader Press, 2004), 147.

16. CAYENNE

CAPSICUM ANNUUM

Solanaceae family

CAUTION: *Cayenne is uncomfortably spicy for many people and can cause gastric upset in high, continuous doses, as well as ulcers. Keep out of the eyes and away from mucous membranes.*

ORIGINS: This plant has been cultivated in Mexico for around 7,000 years.[1] It is native to tropical and subtropical South America and French Guiana.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: A shrubby, dark-green-leafed bush that has long, pointed red peppers with rippled skin. There are many cultivars of cayenne in the family, all with their unique physical traits, but all fruits hang rather than grow upright. The leaves are smooth and simple. The plants grow as perennials in warm climates but as annuals in places that experience winter.

PART USED: fruits

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: stimulating, antiseptic, warming, rubefacient, carminative

TASTE: spicy

SUBSTITUTIONS: ginger

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: These plants grow well as annuals in temperate climates. They fare well even in an apartment or porch so long as they have sufficient sun.

TRADITIONAL USES: In Mexico, cayenne was and is used extensively in cooking and holds an important place in that country's food traditions. Cayenne is mixed into water and drunk for *susto*, or a condition of shock or fright that can make one ill, according to some traditional Latin medicine systems. Cayenne is also used as a styptic to stop bleeding in Mexico. Following the arrival of Columbus in the Americas, the peppers were brought back to Europe and enjoyed around the world as a beloved and powerful spice and medicine.[2]

Cayenne has since become a part of both traditional Chinese medicine and Ayurveda, as well as Korean and Japanese folk medicine. In traditional Chinese medicine, it is used for digestive stimulation, while in Japan and China, a tincture is applied externally for pain and frostbite.[3] Cayenne became an important part of American folk medicine, particularly in Black communities in the South, where it was often mixed with vinegar and used topically or internally for pain, colds, arthritis, and wounds.

MODERN USES: Despite the somewhat painful experience of eating too much cayenne, the peppers make a remarkable topical medicine for pain. Ointments and tinctures rubbed on topically are useful for treating pain from arthritis, lumbago, chilblains, and neuralgia.[4] Shingles and herpes viruses can sometimes leave behind nerve pain after the blistering sores are healed, and this nerve pain can often be addressed with topical cayenne. Cayenne also aids digestive issues like gastric ulcers, reduces appetite, and increases fat metabolism.[5]

Cayenne is a circulatory stimulant and helps thin the blood ever so slightly. It's possible to add cayenne tincture to other medicinal formulas when they need an extra oomph or potentiator, meaning they help promote and increase the effectiveness and power of the other herbs. One could say that cayenne is a synergist, helping all the herbs work together more effectively.

Cayenne works well with berberine-containing herbs like barberry or Oregon grape and the soothing medicine of plantain for wound washes or ointments, especially when a lot of bleeding is present. Keeping a large batch of cayenne oxymel or vinegar for colds and flus is also a great idea! It acts as a warming and stimulating lung medicine; that's part of the lexicon thanks to the wisdom of Black folk medicine traditions in the southern United States.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

CAYENNE OXYMEL

Be sure to put on some gloves! Also, cayenne can burn your eyes, so don't rub your face as you work with these spicy little peppers.

15 to 20 fresh or dried cayenne peppers, stemmed and chopped, including seeds

2 cups organic apple cider vinegar (or other vinegar with at least 5% acidity)
2 cups raw honey

Place the peppers into a 1-quart glass jar, pour in the vinegar and honey, then stir well with a spoon (preferably wooden). Make sure all the pepper pieces are covered with liquid, then place a piece of wax paper on the rim of the jar and close the lid (the wax paper helps protect the metal lid from corrosion). Let the jar sit somewhere cool and dark, stirring a couple of times a week for 2 weeks.

Strain the liquid, discarding the pepper bits (see Note). Rinse the jar and then pour the oxymel back into it. Cover with the lid and store in a cool, dark place out of the sunlight. Store up to 6 months with fresh peppers and up to 1 year with dried.

Mix 1 teaspoon of the oxymel into 1 cup of hot water at a time for fevers, sore throats, and chills. You can also stir this into warmed tea made with other herbs, or use it as a marinade or salad dressing—it is warming, sweet, tangy, and spicy!

Note: Alternatively, you can make a sweet and hot pepper sauce from the peppers. Blend after straining; blend the mash with a splash of olive oil and a pinch of salt.

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1 F. Lembeck, "Columbus, *Capsicum*, and Capsaicin: Past, Present, and Future," *Acta Physiologica Hungarica* 69, no. 34 (1987): 265–73.

2 Muhammad Asif Hanif et al., eds., *Medicinal Plants of South Asia: Novel Sources for Drug Discovery* (Elsevier Science, 2020).

3 P. P. H. But et al., eds., *International Collation of Traditional and Folk Medicine* (World Scientific, 1997), 2:138–39.

4 J. E. Bernstein et al., "Treatment of Chronic Postherpetic Neuralgia with Topical Capsaicin: A Preliminary Study," *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology* 17, no. 1 (1987): 93–96; J. E. Bernstein et al., "Topical Capsaicin Treatment of Chronic Postherpetic Neuralgia," *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology* 21, no. 2, pt. 1 (1989): 265–70.

5 F. W. Leung, "Capsaicin as an Anti-Obesity Drug," *Progress in Drug Research* 68 (2014): 171–79, https://doi:10.1007/978-3-0348-0828-6_7, PMID: 24941669.

17. CHAMOMILE, MANZANILLA

MATRICARIA SPP., *CHAMAEMELUM NOBILE*

Asteraceae family

CAUTION: *Generally considered safe for children, pregnant women, and elderly people. Some people have strong allergies to plants in the aster family, so use with caution if it's for the first time.*

ORIGINS: Chamomile is native to the temperate regions of Asia and Europe, but it is now cultivated worldwide and is part of many nations' folk medicine.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Chamomile has small, sunlike white flowers with yellow centers, much like a tiny daisy. The leaves are fernlike and tender, sweet-smelling like apples when crushed.

PART USED: flowers and leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: anti-inflammatory, anti-allergenic, antispasmodic, digestive, nervine, tonic, vulnerary

TASTE: sweet

SUBSTITUTIONS: tulsi

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Chamomile is easy to grow in temperate climates, and by just harvesting the flowers, you can avoid killing the plant. There are even

special scoops for harvesting that have slits in them to easily scoop the flowers off the plant without damaging the plant!

TRADITIONAL USES: Chamomile is one of the oldest, most widely used, and best documented herbal medicines in the world.[1] The word *chamomile* is derived via French and Latin, from the Greek χαμαίμηλον, *khamaimēlon*, or "earth apple"; from χαμαί, *khamai*, "on the ground"; and from μῆλον, *mēlon*, "apple."[2] It is an ancient medicinal plant and was used by the Egyptians and Romans as a near panacea, or cure-all. It was used as a laxative, to address digestive upset, and to heal snakebites in those regions of antiquity. It is also one of the nine sacred herbs in the historic Anglo-Saxon charm, "The Nine Herbs Charm," written in tenth-century Europe. It was also used as a strewing herb to freshen and cleanse the home and as a traditional brewing herb for ale and beer.

Chamomile was also ingested to treat insomnia, neuralgia, and labor pains, and used externally for ulcers and wounds as a wash; the dew shaken from the flowers was used for tuberculosis in Wales.[3] In Ireland, the root was used to cure toothaches. The tea was even given to troublemaking children to put a stop to their mischief, according to English folk medicine.[4] In Mexican folk medicine, it has historically been used for anxiety, trouble sleeping, and as a sedative; it is known in Spanish as *manzanilla*.[5]

MODERN USES: Chamomile deserves a whole book to describe its many helpful qualities. It is an excellent digestive aid, and the tincture and tea made from it are a useful though somewhat bitter appetite stimulator. That is, they both stimulate the appetite and help soothe gas, bloating, and indigestion. The tea can also soothe colic in babies fed breast milk, and children with nausea or stomachaches can also enjoy this tasty tea. A warm cup of chamomile tea can help people of all ages who experience a nervous stomach.

While it is traditionally used as a sleep herb, adding other helpful sleep aids like skullcap to the tea or tincture generally makes it more powerful. Chamomile tea is also useful as a skin wash for skin conditions like eczema and is soothing for acne, bug bites, and other skin irritations. A salve made with the infused oil is

helpful for this as well. It is also used to treat respiratory illnesses and can be an herbal steam or as a tea alongside peppermint, yarrow, and elderflower.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

CHAMOMILE HAIR RINSE

A traditional hair rinse for fair hair.

2 tablespoons dried chamomile
2 cups freshly boiled water

Place the chamomile in a glass jar with a lid. Pour the boiling water in, cover the jar, and let steep for 20 minutes.

Strain the liquid and allow to cool. Store in the fridge for up to 3 days in a glass jar with a lid.

Use 1 to 2 cups of the hair rinse at a time after washing your hair. Just pour it over the freshly washed hair as a final rinse for shine.

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1 J. K. Srivastava et al., "Chamomile: An Herbal Medicine of the Past with Bright Future," *Molecular Medicine Reports* 3, no. 6 (2010): 895–901.

2 "Chamomile," *Online Etymology Dictionary,* https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=camomile.

3 Marie Trevelyan, *Folk Lore and Folk Stories of Wales* (Literary Licensing, 2014).

4 D. C. Watts, *Dictionary of Plant Lore* (Elsevier Science, 2007), 79.

5 O. Singh et al., "Chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla* L.): An Overview," *Pharmacognosy Review* 5, no. 9 (2011): 82–95.

18. CHICKWEED

STELLARIA MEDIA

Caryophyllaceae family

CAUTION: *Chickweed is high in oxalates and should be avoided by people prone to kidney stones.*

ORIGINS: This plant has its origin in Europe but is now widespread throughout the world, especially Asia and North America.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: This tender, light green, low-growing plant creeps along the ground with its small opposite, teardrop-shaped leaves. The stems are graced with a single line of small, fine hairs that change direction at each node. The flowers are five-petaled, but each flower is deeply cut, causing it to appear to have ten!

PART USED: aerial parts

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: cooling, lymphatic

TASTE: salty

SUBSTITUTIONS: cleavers

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: The nonnative plant can be harvested with impunity. There are many people who cannot find good stands of it that are growing in uncontaminated places and so they grow it in containers instead. It is easy to grow from seed!

TRADITIONAL USES: Chickweed was once regarded as a mover of fluids in the body—a blood and lymph tonic. In Southern folk medicine, it was used for weight loss, skin issues, as a diuretic, and for back aches caused by kidney problems. It was also eaten and drunk as a tea for its laxative effects. Chickweed is helpful for liver and bladder issues because of its mineral-rich nature and promotion of urine flow. It is considered a cooling medicine.

In Irish folk medicine, chickweed was used to make poultices for boils. Chickweed tea was also used as a cough and cold medicine by both Romani and Appalachians. Infusions of chickweed were used to treat scurvy and the skin sores associated with other vitamin-deficiency diseases in Anglo-Saxon England. Chickweed continued to be added to salves and ointments for wounds, ulcers, and other skin irritations up until modern day.

MODERN USES: "Let food be thy medicine" is certainly a wonderful adage, and chickweed is a fine example of a medicinal plant that brings health to the body as food. Chickweed contains minerals, including calcium, iron, magnesium, manganese, selenium, silica, sodium, phosphorus, potassium, and zinc. It also contains vitamins A, B1, and B2, niacin, and vitamin C. It has 6 times the amount of vitamin C, 12 times more calcium, and 83 times more iron than spinach. Chickweed is helpful for the liver, kidneys, and bladder, owing to its mineral-rich nature and promotion of urine flow, which is why it is historically associated with weight loss.

Chickweed makes a great hot poultice for boils, sties, and skin eruptions that need to come to a head. It is also lovely in a tea mixed with cleavers to bring nutrients to the body during the spring, when it is best to harvest them. The tea is also great as a gentle diuretic for swollen legs and ankles where water retention is suspected.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS:
Chickweed really shines as an extracted medicine in water and vinegar. Tincturing it in alcohol is not the best way to utilize its medicine.

CHICKWEED TEA

1 tablespoon chopped fresh chickweed
1 cup freshly boiled water

Place the chickweed in a glass jar and pour the hot water over the herb. Steep covered for 20 minutes and then strain.

Note: To make a larger amount, fill a 1-quart glass jar halfway with chopped fresh chickweed and then pour about 4 cups of hot water to reach the top of the jar. Cover and steep for 20 minutes, then strain into a medium bowl. Pour any excess into a glass jar with a lid and store in the fridge for use in the next 2 to 3 days.

CHICKWEED TONIC VINEGAR SALAD DRESSING

1 cup finely chopped fresh chickweed
½ cup finely chopped cleavers
½ cup finely chopped nettles or purple dead nettle
2 cups organic apple cider vinegar
1 cup organic olive oil

Place the chickweed, cleavers, and nettles in a large glass jar. Add the vinegar and olive oil and mix well. Cover with the lid and place in the fridge to marinate overnight.

Enjoy the dressing over salad, or with quiche, meat, mushrooms, or any other opportunity to glean the nourishment from these plants and the medicine of the vinegar.

19. CINQUEFOIL, FIVE FINGER GRASS

POTENTILLA SPP.

Rosaceae family

CAUTION: *Constipation can occur with very large, regular doses.*

ORIGINS: There are 300 species of *Potentilla*, which grow in temperate areas and the Arctic and Alpine zones of the Northern Hemisphere. They are known as *cinquefoil* in English and *Ratanjot* in Hindi.[1]

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Most *Potentilla* genus plants are low growing and creeping. The leaves are palmately compound and have toothed, fuzzy leaves. The runners they spread from look much like their cousin, strawberry. Their flowers are yellow with five petals.

PART USED: leaves, flowers

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: cooling, astringent, tonifying, antiseptic

TASTE: mildly astringent, neutral

SUBSTITUTIONS: agrimony, strawberry

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Cinquefoil can be found in abundance in some places, but it's best to make sure an area is not contaminated with lead before harvesting. Use scissors to snip the leaves sparingly, being careful not to remove all the leaves from a single plant. Be mindful that bushy cinquefoil, *P. paradoxa,* is endangered in the northeastern United States.[2]

TRADITIONAL USES: This legendary little rose family plant was once an ingredient in the flying ointments of old European witch lore. In Irish folk medicine, it was used for the ague, or shivering fevers.[3] It was also used in European folk medicine as a tea for diarrhea and externally as a wound wash, as well as a mouthwash for sore throats.[4] In Poland, it was even used for the dreaded plague.[5]

Cinquefoil was also used for intermittent fevers, or fevers that come and go, in western Europe. In the Southern folk medicine of North America, it was

traditionally also used as a tea for fever. Cherokee folks used the tea as a mouthwash for thrush, as well as for fevers and as a general tonic.[6] They often used it interchangeably with agrimony and had similar actions.

MODERN USES: Cinquefoil, like many members of the rose family, is a helpful and gentle astringent. A strong tea of the leaves or a root decoction makes a good mouthwash to tighten sore and inflamed gums or soothe canker sores. It is somewhat antimicrobial as well, which makes it helpful for mouth infections. Cinquefoil tea is mildly antispasmodic, helpful for gas pains, bloating, gastric ulcers, gut inflammation, and diarrhea.

The tea is useful topically for burns, much like blackberry leaf, and also as a spray on sunburns. Wherever tissue needs to be cooled and tightened, cinquefoil is a good helper. The tea is a good addition to hemorrhoid treatments and soaks, as well as useful for other inflammations of the urogenital areas. The leaves can be dried and powdered and mixed with other styptic herbs like yarrow to make wound powders.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

CINQUEFOIL TEA

You can also use this tea as a soak or a wash for cuts, irritations of the skin, or abrasions.

2 teaspoons chopped fresh cinquefoil, or 1 teaspoon crumbled dried leaves
1 cup freshly boiled water

Place the cinquefoil in a glass jar and add the hot water and steep for 30 minutes. Strain and drink up to 6 cups of this tea a day.

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1 Shailja Kumari et al., "A Holistic Overview of Different Species of Potentilla, a Medicinally Important Plant, Along with Their Pharmaceutical Significance: A Review," *Journal of Herbal Medicine* 29 (October 2021): 100460, ISSN 2210-8033.

2 Liz Neves, *Northeast Medicinal Plants: Identify, Harvest, and Use 111 Wild Herbs for Health and Wellness* (Timber Press, 2020), 155.

3 Niall Mac Coitir, *Ireland's Wild Plants: Myths, Legends & Folklore* (Collins Press, 2010).

4 Hans Flück, *Medicinal Plants and Their Uses: Medicinal Plants, Simply Described and Illustrated* (Foulsham, 1976).

5 K. Spalek et al., “Historical Ethnopharmacology of the Herbalists from Krummhübel in the Sudety Mountains (Seventeenth to Nineteenth Century), Silesia,” *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine* 15, no. 1 (2019): 24.

6 Paul B. Hamel and Mary U. Chiltoskey, *Cherokee Plants and Their Uses: A 400 Year History* (Herald Publishing, 1975), 29.

20. CLEAVERS, STICKY WILLY, GOOSEGRASS, ROBIN-RUN-THE-HEDGE

GALIUM APARINE

Rubiaceae family

CAUTION: *Be aware that while cleavers are used to help with cystitis, you should consult an experienced practitioner before using diuretic herbs if you have overactive bladder conditions. Also, cleavers can cause contact dermatitis in some people.*

ORIGINS: The botanical name *Galium* is derived from a Greek word for "milk," referring to the use of the plant as a curdling agent in cheese making, while *aparine* means "clinging or seizing," in reference to the many small hooks on the plant that give it its unique clinging nature. Cleavers is native to Asia, Europe, and North America, but it is now widely naturalized, found on all continents except Antarctica. This plant thrives in a variety of habitats, from forest to field, and can survive in a range of temperatures.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: These long and slender-stemmed plants are encircled with whorls of thin, finely hooked leaves, allowing them to "cleave" to you! They often grow in clumps that stick to one another. They have small, four-petaled white flowers.

PART USED: aerials parts

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: cooling, diuretic, nutritive, lymphatic, tonic, astringent

TASTE: salty, neutral

SUBSTITUTIONS: chickweed

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This weedy, abundant nonnative can be harvested with little worry.

TRADITIONAL USES: Cleavers was used throughout Europe to treat kidney and bladder issues, as well as the dreaded scurvy. That is, scurvy is a condition that occurs from a lack of vitamin C, and this weed contains vitamin C in abundance. Many different Indigenous peoples used a variety of *Galium* species

for everything from hoarseness of the throat to making red dye with the roots of *G. tinctorium*. Iroquoian people used the tea as a wash for itching and poison ivy.[1] It was also used as a blood purifier in early American folk medicine, and was drunk as a tea in spring to "clean the blood."[2]

MODERN USES: Cleavers is a nutritive and tonic herb. Both the juice and the tea are very useful for kidney stones and for promoting urine flow or urinary tract infections. Swollen lymph nodes around the head and neck call for cleavers (specifically with conditions like glandular fevers). An infusion and warm poultice made from cleavers is also excellent for skin irritations.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

CLEAVERS ICE CUBES

These ice cubes are handy for later use when the plant's no longer in season.
Simply harvest a large bowl of cleavers, roughly 4 cups finely chopped. Mash them all with your hands to allow them to release their juices. Place them by the teaspoonful into ice cube trays, including any juice and top off with a little water. Freeze and use later on. These are also soothing to the skin and can be directly applied to boils, swellings, and other skin irritations.

CLEAVERS TEA

The best way to utilize the minerals in cleavers is to ingest the plant.

3 big handfuls of fresh cleavers (about 3 cups)
About 4 cups freshly boiled water

Place the cleavers in a 1-quart glass jar and cover with hot water. Cover and steep for 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Let cool slightly, then transfer the cleavers and water to a blender. Process until mostly smooth. Strain out and pour the tea into a 1-quart glass jar, cover with the lid, and store 1 to 2 days in the fridge.

Enjoy this "green juice" freely in spring; just remember that too much juice will act as a laxative!

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1 James William Herrick, "Iroquois Medical Botany" (PhD diss., State University of New York, Albany, 1977), 439.

2 Bill Church, *Medicinal Plants, Trees & Shrubs of Appalachia* (Tate Publishing, 2013), 19.

21. DANDELION

TARAXACUM OFFICINALE

Asteraceae family

CAUTION: *May increase hypersecretion of gastric acid if an imbalance already exists. Also, avoid if you have gallstones. Avoid drinking lots of dandelion tea if you have bladder issues like cystitis or conditions in which urinating more frequently should be avoided.*

ORIGINS: Native to Eurasia, dandelion is naturalized throughout North America, southern Africa, South America, New Zealand, Australia, and India. It is one of the most common plants in the United States, growing in all 50 states and most parts of Canada.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Dandelion grows in a rosette with large, tender green, and deeply toothed smooth leaves. When broken, the leaves yield a white milky latex. Their sunlike yellow flowers are born singly atop a hollow stem that juts up from the rosette of leaves. Many dandelion lookalikes have multiple flowers coming off each stem, so to be sure you have a dandelion; look for a single flower atop each single stem. The taproot is pale and carrot-like.

PART USED: roots, leaves, flowers, stems

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: bitter, cold, digestive

TASTE: bitter, earthy

SUBSTITUTIONS: burdock

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Dandelion is an abundant nonnative and can be harvested with impunity. However, it often grows in waste places and along roadsides, so it may have contaminants. Be aware of the soil quality where you are harvesting, since the plant can absorb heavy metals and other toxic compounds.

TRADITIONAL USES: Dandelions are one of the most recognizable herbs in the Western herbal tradition. This cheerful yellow flower is easy to find and beautiful to behold. In England and other parts of Europe, dandelion root and

leaf teas were used to treat fevers, boils, eye problems, diarrhea, fluid retention, liver congestion, heartburn, and skin ailments. The white goo, called latex, that oozes out of the plant when broken (unrelated to actual latex, which causes allergies in some folks) was used in British folk medicine to cure warts, a use that persists today.

All parts of the plant are diuretic, which led to the folk name *pissabeds* and in England was believed to cause children to wet the bed by so much as touching it. Medicinally, the eighteenth-century influential English herbalist Nicholas Culpepper wrote that dandelion has an "opening and cleansing quality... it openeth passages." The leaves were used in Scotland and Ireland to treat stings, much as were plantain and dock leaves. The leaves were also eaten in bread-and-butter sandwiches and were believed to be an ulcer cure. In Ireland, also, dandelion was believed to be heart medicine, a uniquely Irish folk belief. The roots were once included in the traditional dish of bitter herbs during Passover.

In North America, dandelion wine was drunk hot as a cure for colds. In Pennsylvania, cough syrup was reputedly made from lemon, sugar, and dandelion blossoms. In Appalachia, chickweed and dandelion leaves were cooked together, and the resulting liquid was mixed with vinegar and drunk as a tonic. The dandelion root can be roasted in a low oven, then brewed into a fine coffee substitute.

MODERN USES: Dandelion is a nutritive medicine and can be used merely by eating the roots, flowers, and leaves. It is high in dietary fiber, vitamin A (the leaves specifically), vitamin C, vitamin E (alpha tocopherol), vitamin K, thiamin, riboflavin, vitamin B6, calcium, iron, potassium, and manganese, just to name a few. The roots are edible when young and can be diced and stir-fried or pickled. The roots are rich in inulin, a prebiotic that aids gut health. The flowers and leaves can be eaten raw or cooked, but even the young leaves can be quite bitter.

Dandelion roots are excellent as a liver-support tea, and they taste delicious toasted as a caffeine-free, coffee-like beverage. The leaves have long been savored as a nourishing food, even though they are bitter.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

HERBAL "COFFEE" (DANDELION ROOT DECOCTION)

This is delicious as a coffee replacement, yielding a tasty yet bitter beverage that stimulates digestion and supports the bowels and kidneys by encouraging urination. Optionally, you can toast the dried dandelion root gently before brewing to make it taste even more like coffee.

1 tablespoon dried dandelion root
2 cups water
Honey (optional)

If desired, heat 1 tablespoon of the dandelion root in a small cast-iron skillet or other heavy pan and briefly toast over low to medium heat, stirring constantly to prevent it from burning. Do not add oil. Transfer the root to a medium saucepan and add the water. Cover and simmer over low heat for 20 minutes.

Pour the decoction through a strainer and, if desired, sweeten with some honey and enjoy freely.

DANDELION LEAF TEA

The leaf tea is one of the most effective diuretics for those who do not have cystitis or other overactive bladder issues. It really promotes urination!

1 teaspoon dried dandelion leaves
1 cup freshly boiled water

Place the dandelion leaves in a glass jar and pour the freshly boiled water over the herb. Steep for 15 minutes. Strain and drink 1 to 3 cups a day.

DANDELION FLOWER VINEGAR

You can use this vinegar as a salad dressing by adding some garlic, salt, pepper, and olive oil, or make it into an interesting beverage by stirring a tablespoon of it into some seltzer water. You can also add some honey if it's too sour for you. This is a great way to get more vitamins A and C!

1 cup (2 large handfuls) fresh dandelion blossoms
3 to 4 cups organic apple cider vinegar (or other vinegar with at least 5% acidity)

Pack the blossoms into a 1-quart glass jar. Add enough vinegar to cover the blossoms completely. Place a piece of wax paper on the rim and then close with the jar lid. Let the mixture steep for 2 weeks.

Pour the liquid through a strainer and compost the flowers, if possible. Wash the jar and then pour the vinegar back into it, close with the lid, label, and store up to a year in a cool, dark place. You can take 1 tablespoon in warmed water for indigestion or urinary issues, or use as the base of a nutritious salad dressing by adding olive oil and chopped garlic and seasoning with salt and pepper.

DANDELION TINCTURE

1:2, 80%: fresh root
1:5, 50%: dry leaf

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 20 drops to ½ teaspoon three times a day.

22. DATURA, JIMSONWEED

DATURA SPP.

Solanaceae family

CAUTION: *Deadly poison. This plant is to be approached only with reverence and caution. Side effects of any internal use can result in dry mouth, difficulty swallowing, pupil dilation, confusion, and hallucinations, all of which can persist for days. Positive experiences with datura are only rarely mentioned. Deaths have resulted from the use of this plant. Do not use around children or store in a house in easy-to-access places.*

ORIGINS: Some botanists say datura may have originated in the region of the Caspian Sea, while others postulate it came from Mexico. It is widespread and considered a noxious weed in North America, despite a possible nativity connection and the deep involvement in Indigenous medicine traditions as an entheogen.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: While the leaves can be variously shaped, they are broad and alternate. The flowers are large and showy white to purple tinged. The seed pods are uniquely spiny and round, filled with many shiny black seeds.

PART USED: leaves, flowers, seeds

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: deliriant, hallucinogenic, drying, warming

TASTE: bitter, acrid

SUBSTITUTIONS: mugwort

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This plant grows abundantly in the Americas, in fields and along roadsides. It is also easily grown in containers and gardens.

TRADITIONAL USES: Datura, or jimsonweed, holds a special place in the minds of many herbalists as a deadly poison, a beautiful showy flower, and a sacred entheogen. The plant came to North America with the earliest European colonists, which confused many botanists in colonized America, who assumed it was native. In 1676, in Jamestown, Virginia; a cook there mistook the leaves for a wholesome food and served it to soldiers, who apparently became delirious and

confused for days afterwards. At that time, it became known as Jamestown weed, which eventually turned into the folk vernacular, jimsonweed.

In Appalachian folk medicine, jimsonweed leaves were used as a hot poultice for a fevered forehead and headaches. The poultice was also bound to painful and sore joints to soothe inflammation. The leaves were dried and smoked to open the bronchioles of asthma and tuberculosis sufferers.

In Black folk medicine in the American South, the leaves of this was used as a tea to rid one of worms. The leaves were also added to salves for wounds. Indigenous North Americans used the leaves for pain largely externally, as a plaster for burns and inflamed joints, but they also smoked it for shortness of breath.

In Mexico and surrounding regions, *Datura stramonium* was used similarly to *D. innoxia.* As with other plants in this maligned family, the uses of datura in Mexico often occurred in shadowy places; in local Catholic circles, it was believed the plant was created by the devil himself.

Most writers in antiquity seemed to fear the datura plant. Theophrastus wrote that this plant would drive a man to permanent madness and death. Its reported uses in the cults of Kali drove worshipers to legendary frenzied human sacrifice, which helped create the darkness that surrounds this plant's name.

In Europe, datura was associated with witches and flying ointments, while the seeds were added to beers in Germany, Russia, and China to lend them narcotic properties. The seeds were also used as incense, a habit said to have come from the Romani. Datura was burned to chase away ghosts or, conversely, to invoke spirits. A type of weather divination was performed by throwing seeds that had been left out for a night into the fire and watching their crackle patterns; if they burned with loud cracklings, the winter would be dry but very cold. The Romani also threw the seeds onto an animal-skin drum and hit it with a mallet a certain number of times; the way the seeds fell in relation to the lines drawn on the drum were answers to questions about whether a sick person would heal, the location of stolen objects, and other useful matters.[1]

MODERN USES: Datura is used as an external pain remedy, applied topically. High doses can result in heart rate increase and a loss of motor function; the

result can be convulsions, hallucinations, and finally, death. Therefore, *never ingest this plant.* The seeds contain the most active components, followed by the leaves, and finally the root.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

DATURA PAIN OINTMENT

Caution: *Always wear gloves when handling this plant and ensure all surfaces that it touches are well washed afterward—this plant is very toxic. Consider keeping some medicine-making equipment separate from cooking equipment to prevent cross contamination.*

2 tablespoons crushed dried *Datura stramonium* seeds
1 cup olive oil (or other good-quality oil)
1 ounce beeswax (pastilles melt the fastest)
¼ teaspoon rosemary essential oil (optional; for longer shelf life)

Place the seeds and oil in the top of a double boiler. Add water to the bottom pot and heat the double boiler gently over low heat for 3 hours; you want it just warm, not simmering, as this can damage the plant compounds.

Pour the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer and carefully return the infused oil to the top of the double boiler. Add the beeswax and stir until dissolved. If using, add the rosemary essential oil. Transfer to small salve tins and label them well. This can last about 6 months in a cool, dark, dry cupboard.

Caution: *Label the container clearly that it is not for consumption. Some sensitive people may still have unpleasant energetic effects from this powerful plant, so try small amounts rubbed onto sore joints, away from mucousmembranes. Wash your hands and all medicine-making equipment very thoroughly after application. Keep away from children.*

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1 Christian Raitsch, *The Encyclopedia of Psychoactive Plant Ethnopharmacology and Its Applications* (Park Street, 2005).

23. DEAD NETTLE, RED NETTLE, PURPLE NETTLE, PURPLE ARCHANGEL

LAMIUM PURPUREUM

Lamiaceae family

CAUTION: *none known*

ORIGINS: This small, ubiquitous "weed" is native to Europe, Siberia, and northern Africa, but it has naturalized and is now considered a weed worldwide in temperate places. It is common in the United States and Canada. The plant is called dead nettle because, while it resembles stinging nettle, it is "dead" and does not sting.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Dead nettle is a low-growing herbaceous plant. It has opposite, finely haired leaves that have large, simple teeth and that smell earthy when crushed. They often are green on the undersides and purple-tinged on top. The flowers are pale purple to fuchsia and are lipped with a top, hoodlike petal.

PART USED: aerial parts

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: antihistamine, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, astringent, immuno-stimulating, nutritive, vulnerary

TASTE: green, earthy

SUBSTITUTIONS: stinging nettle

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This plant is often found growing very early in spring in garden beds and is often abundant. Use sharp scissors to harvest just the tops of young flowering plants.

TRADITIONAL USES: This plant is said to be called "archangel" because it often blooms on the day of Archangel Michael, May 8 in the old calendar and now April 27. In Essex, according to English folk medicine, the herb is soaked in wine and used as a remedy for piles. John Gerard and Nicholas Culpepper, historic English folk herbalists, both agree the plants "make the heart merry and drive away melancholy."[1] It was mixed with vinegar, pounded with a mortar and

pestle, and placed on wounds to stop excessive bleeding.[2] It was used for the "King's Evil," or scrofula, as well as to treat boils in the fourteenth century.[3]

In Ireland, a decoction of the roots was used to "bring out the rash" in measles, as well as used for headaches.[4] It was also used in cases of too little menstrual flow, or in similar ways as white dead nettle (*Lamium album*), which grows in many of the same places in Europe.

MODERN USES: Dead nettle is a nutritive medicine. It is lovely as a spring tonic, best steamed or cooked with eggs. It has mannotriose, a storage carbohydrate with prebiotic, antioxidant, and immuno-stimulatory properties.[5] Despite its bad-tasting reputation, when properly prepared dead nettle can be a delicious addition to spring wild-foods dishes. It is nutritious, containing iron, vitamins, and fiber. The oil in the seeds are high in antioxidants, while the bruised leaves can be applied to external cuts and wounds to stop bleeding and aid in healing. Dead nettle is a good source of flavonoids, including a special one called quercetin.

Purple dead nettle can improve performance of the immune system while also reducing sensitivity to allergens and inhibiting inflammation. It's also useful for anti-allergy applications owing to the concentration of flavonoids, which help reduce the release of histamine. So, the tea from this plant is helpful for allergies and histamine issues, especially in the evenings when histamine levels rise. You can bruise the leaves, then apply them to minor skin abrasions and wounds as a poultice, owing to their astringency.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

DEAD NETTLE VINEGAR

3 cups chopped fresh dead nettle
About 4 cups organic apple cider vinegar

Fill a 1-quart glass jar with the dead nettle. Stuff it into the jar so it's tightly packed. Pour in the vinegar to completely cover the nettle, all the way to the lid line. Place a piece of wax paper over the top, then close with the lid. Let sit for 2 weeks.

Pour the liquid through a strainer, squeezing it to release all the vinegar. Rinse the jar and pour the vinegar back into it. Cover and store 6 to 8 months.

To use, pour 1 to 2 tablespoons into a glass of water to drink. You can also use some as a salad dressing, or dilute with warm water and use as a soak for splinters and stubborn wounds.

DEAD NETTLE TEA

2 cups chopped fresh dead nettle
About 4 cups freshly boiled water

Place the dead nettle in a 1-quart glass jar; the nettle should come about one-third of the way to the top. Pour in the hot water to fill to the top of the jar. Cover and steep for 4 hours.

Pour the tea through a strainer, squeezing out any goodness left in the plant. Rinse the jar and then pour the tea back into it. Cover and store in the fridge for 2 to 3 days.

Drink the full 4 cups of tea each day when allergy season is approaching. It's best to start drinking the tea as soon as you see the dead nettles popping up. You can also warm the tea and use for a sitz bath to treat vaginal discharge and leukorrhea.

DEAD NETTLE TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh herb
1:5, 40%: dried herb

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tictures. Take 1 to 3 dropperfuls three times per day for allergies.

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1 Elisabeth Brooke, *Traditional Western Herbal Medicine* (Aeon Books, 2019), 123.

2 Warren Dawson, *A Leechbook, or Collection of Medical Recipes of the Fifteenth Century: The Text of Ms. No. 136 of the Medical Society of London, Together with a Transcript into Modern Spelling* (Macmillan, 1934).

3 D. C. Watts, *Dictionary of Plant Lore* (Elsevier Science, 2007), 314.

4 D. E. Allen and G. Hatfield, *Medicinal Plants in Folk Tradition: An Ethnobotany of Britain & Ireland* (Timber Press, 2004), 216.

5 Raquel dos Santos et al., "Manninotriose Is a Major Carbohydrate in Red Deadnettle (*Lamium Purpureum*, Lamiaceae)," *Annals of Botany* 111, no. 3 (2013): 385–93.

24. DILL

ANETHUM GRAVEOLENS

Apiaceae family

CAUTION: *Members of the carrot family can be confusing to identify because of morphological similarities. Some of the members are fatal! Please identify properly before ingesting.*

ORIGINS: Some believe the name *dill* comes from the Old Norse *dilla,* meaning "to lull." The *Anethum* genus name derives from the Greek words *aneeson* or *aneeton*, which mean "strong smelling." Dill is native to southwestern Asia and southeastern Europe, and it has been cultivated and traded since antiquity.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Dill looks much like its cousin fennel. The leaves are tender, dark green, feathery, and fernlike. The plants can grow up to four feet tall and are deeply aromatic. The flowers are small and yellow and grow in an umbel, or umbrella-like, shape.

PART USED: leaves, flowers, seeds

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: carminative, warming, aromatic

TASTE: aromatic, warming, pungent

SUBSTITUTIONS: fennel

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: The dill plant is often grown in gardens and is not frequently found in the wild.

TRADITIONAL USES: Dill has a wonderful pungent taste that many know as the main flavoring agent for pickles. In Ayurvedic medicine, dill seeds were chewed for good breath and to help prevent the pains of hunger.[1] The seeds were also used to promote milk flow in lactation and to help soothe upset stomachs. A warmed poultice of the aerial parts also had ancient use as a remedy for a hernia in the abdomen, as well as for hemorrhoids.

Dill was used by Egyptian doctors 5,000 years ago to treat headaches, and it was also found among Roman ruins in Great Britain. In the Middle Ages, it was thought to protect against witchcraft. The Greeks covered their heads with dill leaves to induce sleep.

Dill is used in Ayurveda for abdominal discomfort, colic, and for promoting digestion. In Chinese medicine, dill is used to dispel colds and is used to season meats to make them more digestible and is used to treat a general lack of appetite.

MODERN USES: Dill seeds are the most often used part of the plant in modern herbal practice. Dill is carminative, warming and stimulating to the digestive system, and is used as a reliever of gas. Chewing the seeds is a quick and easy breath freshener. Dill is safe for nursing mothers; the leaves or seeds can be infused in warm milk or made into tea for lactation support. The above ground parts can also be used as a warm poutlcie for blocked milk ducts of the breast when nursing infants.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

DILL SEED TEA

1 teaspoon dill seeds, roughly crushed
2 cups freshly boiled water

Place the dill seeds in a glass jar. Add the hot water and steep for 20 minutes.

Strain, jar and lid. Store 2 to 3 days in the fridge. For a stronger medicine, consider decoction for 15 minutes.

Sip the tea throughout the day for indigestion or to support milk flow during lactation.

DILL CORDIAL

2 cups chopped fresh dill, or 2 tablespoons crushed dill seeds
Roughly 2 cups honey
About 2 cups good brandy

Place the dill in a quart mason jar. Add the honey and brandy to the jar to the lid line and stir well with a wooden spoon. Lid the jar and allow it to infuse for one moon cycle, or roughly 1 month.

When you're ready to strain it, a couple of hours ahead, place the jars in a sunny window to warm the honey. This helps its flow more easily. Strain the liquid through a fine-mesh strainer into a large glass measuring cup, Using a funnel, pour the strained liquid into a

suitable bottle like a pop top, then seal and set aside. The cordial will keep for years in a cool, dark place.

Serve the cordial by adding 1 tablespoon to a glass of mineral water; top with a lemon slice and a sprig of dill; it is soothing for stomachaches, indigestion, and gas. You can also take it by the tablespoonful as is.

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1 S. Jana and G. S. Shekhawat, “Anethum graveolens: An Indian Traditional Medicinal Herb and Spice,” *Pharmacognosy Reviews* 4, no. 8 (2010): 179–84.

25. ECHINACEA, PURPLE CONEFLOWER, SNAKEROOT

ECHINACEA SPP.

Asteraceae family

CAUTION: *High doses can cause nausea. Echinacea can be contraindicated with certain autoimmune disorders.*

ORIGINS: Native to eastern and central North America, echinacea is now threatened in the wild and is one of the best-known medicinal herbs in the world.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Echinacea has toothed, hairy leaves that grow in clusters. The flowers are pinkish purple and occur singly atop their smooth stems. The centers are large and domed and appear somewhat spiny. Some species have thinner or thicker petals and lighter or darker purple to pink shades.

PART USED: root, flowers

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: immune-stimulant, anti-inflammatory, antibiotic, diaphoretic, vulnerary

TASTE: bitter, pungent, warming, electric or tingling

SUBSTITUTIONS: elderberry

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: All species of this plant are best not harvested in the wild but they can be easy to grow in a garden. There are ten species, and because of their overharvesting, it is paramount to protect these important and beautiful plants.

TRADITIONAL USES: This is one of the most widely used medicinal plants of the Indigenous Nations on the North American Plains. People of the Upper Missouri River region used the root to treat snake and other venomous bites, while the Sioux used it for rabies and badly infected wounds. It was also used for its tingling properties to treat toothaches and to numb the hands when handling hot foods or coals. Echinacea tea was rubbed topically onto sore muscles, especially those in the neck. It was also used to treat colic, sore eyes, and for advanced stages of venereal diseases.

Plant poultices of echinacea were applied to mumps and other external bumps and skin disorders. European colonists did not use echinacea until herbal doctors John King and H. C. F. Meyer of Nebraska in the 1880s mentioned its effective use for rattlesnake bites.[1] It entered the *materia medica* at that point and was embraced for its benefits in treating rattlesnake bites, bites of venomous insects, and other intense infections.

MODERN USES: Echinacea is best known for its positive effects on the immune system. Chronic infections can benefit greatly from this plant, especially in formulas that treat chronic fatigue, colds, flus, skin infections, and general upper respiratory issues. It also can help with asthma and other respiratory symptoms that result from the allergy stress. The tingling sensation that fresh echinacea root gives makes it an excellent gargle for sore throats, mouth sores, and gum infections.

There is some debate about whether echinacea works well to stimulate the immune system if taken for more than ten days. Because of the work of great herbalists like Paul Bergner, it's estimated that echinacea continues to aid the immune system for longer periods and does not need to be dosed 10 days on and 5 days off, as is sometimes recommended. While helpful for some autoimmune

disorders, it can also aggravate certain conditions, owing to the increase in white blood cell production it promotes.[2]

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

ECHINACEA TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh roots

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 3 to 6 dropperfuls per day for acute infections

ECHINACEA ROOT DECOCTION

2 tablespoons dried echinacea root
2 cups water

Place the echinacea root in a medium saucepan and add the water. Cover the pan and simmer over low heat for 15 to 30 minutes.

Pour the decoction through a strainer into a glass jar. Cover with a lid and keep for2 to 3 days in the fridge in a glass jar.

Use the liquid warm (not too hot) as a soak for infected wounds, splinters, and abrasions. You can also use it as an eye wash for conjunctivitis or sties.

Caution: Do not squeeze a sty.

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1 J. D. Niederkorn, *Echinacea* (Lloyd Brothers, 1910), 2.

2 Paul Bergner, "Echinacea Myth: Phagocytosis Not Diminished After Ten Days," *Medical Herbalism* 6, no. 1 (1994).

26. ELDER, ELDERBERRY

SAMBUCUS CANADENSIS, S. NIGRA

Adoxaceae family

CAUTION: *Raw elderberries and the plant's leaves, twigs, branches, seeds, and roots all contain cyanide-inducing glycosides, which are toxic in large doses. Do not eat raw berries or use them for medicine. Only boiling, drying in a dehydrator, or cooking destroys these compounds.*

ORIGINS: The species *Sambucus canadensis* grows throughout North America, from Canada to Florida and west to Arizona and Texas, as well as down to South America. In contrast, *S. nigra* is a species complex that is native to most of Europe. Elderberry can be found on the edges of fields and in the forest. You will often see it blooming along roadsides.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Elderberry has woody stems covered in small bumps. All species have compound leaves with toothed edges. The flowers are born on umbels, or umbrella-like structures, and are creamy white with five petals and lots of visible yellow pollen. The berries begin as small, green, and round but ripen to a deep purple-black.

PART USED: flowers, ripe berries

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: diaphoretic, immuno-stimulating

TASTE: sweet, sour

SUBSTITUTIONS: turkey tail mushroom

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Elder (*S. canadensis)* is often prolific in North America, but remember that if you harvest the flowers, then no berries will come from that plant. *S. nigra* has a harvesting taboo in Scotland, Denmark, Germany, and other western European countries, meaning there is a special way to harvest it in folk culture. It is said that one must always ask permission of the plant itself before gathering, or legend says that bad luck will befall the greedy picker.

All green parts of the plant contain cyanide compounds, so remove all the little green stem bits and green berries before making medicine. To easily remove

the berries from the stems, place them in the freezer on a baking tray. After a few hours they will fall right off the stems when gently shaken into a bowl.

TRADITIONAL USES: Elder trees are rich in lore. If one were going to cut an elder in western Europe, permission had to be asked (as noted above). Elder was regarded as powerfully protective and in England, branches were hung above doors and windows to protect homes. Fairies were said to live in the elder trees, so they were planted near homes as protection. If an elder twig was planted on a grave and it grew, that was a sign the dead person was happy.

Elder was considered protective, but in folklore it was a tree to be cautious of. The elder wood was never to be burned, and in some places bringing the flowers inside the house was deemed unlucky, for they were believed to attract snakes. In British folk herbalism, the berries and flowers of the black elder (*S. nigra*) were crafted into a traditional blood purifier and flu remedy, often in the form of elderberry wine.[1]

In North America, Cherokee peoples use elderberry teas and strong infusions for rheumatism and elderflower tea as a diaphoretic.[2] These were also a traditional toxin clearing remedy and blood cleanser. In European folk medicine, *S. nigra* was used for rheumatism, fevers, colds, and flus. The bark was also used as a poultice for mastitis.

MODERN USES: Paired with peppermint and yarrow, elderflower makes an excellent tea for treating hay fever or influenza. The elderberries are often used also for flu when prepared as a medicinal syrup. The tincture of the flowers is also useful for bronchitis, pneumonia, and many respiratory illnesses. Dried elderflowers can be added to salves for bumps and bruises. It can also be combined with other herbs for many infections of both the urogenital and gastrointestinal tracts.[3]

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

ELDERBERRY TEA

1 teaspoon dried elderberries

1 cup water
Honey (optional)

Place the elderberries in a small saucepan. Add water and simmer on low heat for 20 minutes.

Pour the liquid through a strainer into a mug or glass jar, then sweeten with honey, if desired. Drink ¼ cup at a time throughout the day at the onset of any illness.

ELDERFLOWER TINCTURE

1:2, 80%: fresh flowers

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 20 to 40 drops three to four times a day.

ELDERBERRY TINCTURE

1:5, 60%: dried berries

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 1 dropperful in hot tea three times a day.

ELDERBERRY OXYMEL COUGH SYRUP

1 cup dried elderberries, or 2 cups fresh berries
2 cups organic raw apple cider vinegar
2 cups raw honey

Moisten the dried elderberries in about ½ of water cup. Place the dried or fresh berries in a small saucepan, cover the pan, place over low heat, and simmer gently until soft, about 20 minutes, stirring constantly. Let the berries cool, then use a funnel to pour them and their liquid into a glass jar. Pour in the vinegar and honey, and use a wooden spoon to stir well. Place a piece of wax paper over the top and add the lid to seal the jar. Let the jar sit somewhere cool and dark for 2 weeks, stirring a couple of times a week.

Strain into a bowl. Rinse the jar, then pour the oxymel back into it. Add the lid and store for 6 months in the fridge.

For coughs, take 1 teaspoon of the syrup up to six times a day.

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1 Heather Luna, “Elderberry,” ACORN School of Herbal Medicine website, n.d., www.acornherbschool.com/elderberry.

2 Paul B. Hamel and Mary U. Chiltoskey, *Cherokee Plants and Their Uses: A 400 Year History* (Herald Publishing, 1975), 33.

3 Luna, “Elderberry.”

27. ELECAMPANE, ELF WORT

INULA HELENIUM

Asteraceae family

CAUTION: *Not to be used in pregnancy or by people with extreme allergies to the plants in the family* Asteraceae.

ORIGINS: Sometimes known as elfdock, this plant is native to Europe and Asia. It has naturalized in some parts of North America, from Nova Scotia to North Carolina. The species name shows an association with Helen of Troy, as it is said she clutched a branch of elecampane when she was carried off by Paris. Other legends say the name was born from the tears she shed.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Elecampane has very large, softly velvet, lance-shaped leaves and large, brilliant yellow circular flowers. This plant can get very tall—up to 60 inches! The roots are thick and branching and have a spicy, sweet aroma.

PART USED: roots

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: hot, dry, stimulating, aromatic, expectorant

TASTE: bitter, pungent

SUBSTITUTIONS: horehound

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This plant is naturalized in very few areas of North America so is best grown in a garden. Harvest the second- or third-year roots in the fall.

TRADITIONAL USES: "Elecampane may the spirit sustain" is a saying that dates back to ancient Rome. The plant has a longstanding history as medicine—so much so that it was featured as the reviver of the dead in medieval "mumming" plays. The roots are the most medicinally potent part of the plant, and they have long been used as cough medicine for both humans and animals. They have also been used as a remedy for deep, wet coughs and stagnant digestion. This warming, bitter root is excellent as a candy to chew for an upset stomach. The ancient Roman natural philosopher of the first century, Pliny the Elder, said of this sunny herb, "Let no day pass without eating some of the roots of Enula, considered to help digestion and cause mirth." Hippocrates also wrote of elecampane as a stimulant for the kidneys, brain, uterus, and stomach.

MODERN USES: Elecampane is a great medicine for phlegmy, or wet coughs; deep-seated, rattling coughs can become more yielding with the warming powers of this aromatic plant. It both uniquely soothes and stimulates with its aromatic oils and the mucilage they contain. It also has antimicrobial properties beneficial to both the respiratory and digestive systems. Candida and fungal issues of the gut benefit from this wonderful medicine as well.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

ELECAMPANE-ROOT DECOCTION

1 tablespoon fresh or dried elecampane root (powdered or chipped)
1 to 2 cups water
Honey (optional)

Place the root in a medium saucepan and add 2 cups water if using fresh root or 1 cup if using dried. Put the pan over medium-low heat, bring to a boil, reduce the heat, cover, and simmer for 15 minutes. Turn off the heat, cover the pot, and leave to steep for 15 to 30 minutes.

Pour the tea through a strainer into a glass jar. Cover and store any excess in the fridge for 2 to 3 days.

Take about ½ cup of the tea, preferably sweetened with honey, as it is quite bitter, three times per day.

Elecampane Root Tincture

1:2, 75%: fresh root
1:5, 60%: dry root

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 10 to 60 drops three to six times per day.

Elecampane Infused No-Cook Honey Syrup for Coughs

This syrup is lovely mixed into yarrow, elderflower, or mint teas for bad colds, coughs, and the flu.

1 cup finely grated fresh elecampane roots
About 2 cups raw honey

Wash your fresh elecampane roots, then grate them finely. Place the elecampane roots in a pint glass jar. Add the honey and stir the mixture with a wooden spoon to get out all the air bubbles. Allow this to infuse at room temperature for 1 week, stirring occasionally, then transfer the jar to the fridge. Take a teaspoon and mix it into a cup of freshly boiled water for an instant cough syrup or sweet tea. It will last nearly indefinitely in the fridge.

Take up to six times a day for coughs.

28. FENNEL

FOENICULUM VULGARE

Apiaceae family

CAUTION: *A culinary herb, fennel is generally considered safe for those who are not allergic. If wild harvesting, be careful, as the carrot family has deadly members.*

ORIGINS: Fennel is native to the Mediterranean region, but it is now grown extensively in western and eastern Europe, North Africa, India, and China.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Fennel has thin, feathery green or bronze fronds that top a pale bulb. The flowers are small and yellow, growing in an umbrella-like pattern. The plant and seeds smell like anise (licorice) when crushed.

PART USED: seeds, leaves, bulb

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: digestive, antispasmodic, warming

TASTE: sweet, spicy

SUBSTITUTIONS: ginger, dill

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Fennel has poisonous look-alikes in the wild, like dog fennel (*Eupatorium capillifolium*), so always double-check your identification if wild foraging, especially in the western states of the United States, where it has now gone wild and is considered invasive. The licorice-like scent is a great way to ensure you have the right plant, but please observe caution!

TRADITIONAL USES: Fennel has been used in folk medicine all around the world. In the traditional Arabic nation's medicine, the seeds are an important digestive and have also been used historically as a diuretic.[1] The ancient Greeks and Romans believed fennel bestowed strength, courage, and longevity. In northwestern Europe during the Middle Ages, fennel and St. Johns wort were hung in bundles over doors on Midsummer's Eve to ward off evil spirits and to protect the home from witchcraft. In traditional Chinese medicine, fennel was used as a powder poultice for slowly healing snakebites.[2]

MODERN USES: Fennel is one of the best digestive and gas-relieving herbs. It is rich in volatile oils that help soothe spasms in the digestive tract, as both a tea from the seeds and as a tincture. In fact, fennel seed tea is great for stomachaches of all kinds, from food poisoning to drinking too much alcohol. Irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn's disease, and ulcerative colitis can all be gently aided along with Western medicine with teas of fennel, helping ease the intense pains that sometimes accompany these gastric diseases. Fennel is also a helpful liver support, as it stimulates digestion and gastric secretions.

Fennel tea acts as a galactagogue and is helpful for those breastfeeding and seeking to increase their milk supply. Oil infused with fennel seed is also helpful externally for the vaginal dryness, atrophy, and itching that can unfortunately often accompany menopause.[3]

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

FENNEL SEED TINCTURE

1:5, 60%: dried seeds

See pages 26–33 for instructions for making tinctures. Take 30 to 50 drops in warm water or tea for acute stomachaches, as needed.

FENNEL SEED TEA

½ teaspoon crushed fennel seeds
2 cups freshly boiled water

Place the seeds in a 1-pint jar and add the boiling water. Cover with the lid and steep for 15 minutes.

Pour the tea through a strainer and drink 1 to 3 cups per day. Store any excess tea in a glass jar in the fridge for up to 3 days.

Fennel Seed, Dill Seed, and Catnip Cordial

This is best for stomach troubles. If desired, add other digestive herbs to the mix and make it your own special recipe. Try herbs like ginger, chamomile, and mint, as they are all lovely additions.

½ cup fennel seeds, crushed
½ cup dill seeds, crushed
½ cup dried catnip leaves and flowers
2 cups brandy
2 cups honey

Place the fennel and dill seeds and catnip in a glass jar and stir well. Add the brandy and honey and stir well. Cover and allow to infuse in a cool dark place for 4 to 8 weeks.

Strain and keep in a sealed bottle or glass jar for up to 1 year in a cool, dark place.

Take 1 teaspoon of the cordial in a cup of warm water for bad stomachaches, gas, and indigestion.

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1 M. O. M. Tanira et al., "Pharmacological and Toxicological Investigations on *Foeniculum vulgare* Dried Fruit Extract in Experimental Animals," *Phytotherapy Research* 10, no. 1 (1996): 33–36.

2 Madame Grieve, *A Modern Herbal* (Stone Basin Books, 1931/1992), 293–95.

3 Masomeh Yaralizadeh et al., "Effect of *Foeniculum vulgare* (fennel) Vaginal Cream on Vaginal Atrophy in Postmenopausal Women: A Double-Blind Randomized Placebo-Controlled Trial," *Maturitas* 84 (February 2016): 75–80.

29. FEVERFEW

TANACETUM PARTHENIUM

Asteraceae family

CAUTION: *Do not use while pregnant or nursing. Also, do not take while on blood thinners. If you are allergic to ragweed, feverfew may also cause reactions.*

ORIGINS: Feverfew is native to the Balkan Peninsula and is now found in Australia, Europe, China, Japan, and North Africa. Feverfew was introduced in the United States during the mid-nineteenth century.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Feverfew is often mistaken for chamomile, with its small, daisylike white flowers with yellow centers. The soft, velvety, fernlike leaves are fragrant when crushed and grow in round rosettes.

PART USED: aerial parts

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: heating, drying

TASTE: pungent, bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: chamomile

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This plant is generally grown in gardens. It is easy to grow and abundant.

TRADITIONAL USES: The *feverfew* name stems from the Latin word *febrifugia*, or "fever reducer." Feverfew is a small-flowered plant in the aster family, whose sunny yellow center opens around midsummer in temperate climates every year. This flower has earned it one of its many folk names—midsummer daisy—because it blooms during June and has a daisylike appearance. Other names it has earned throughout history are featherfoil, featherfowl, and parthenium. Ibn Sina, known in the West as Avicenna, wrote in his *Canon of Medicine* that feverfew was aligned with the natures of heating and drying. He was a preeminent Islamic medical writer during the Islamic Golden Age, and his books from the end of the tenth century were used frequently in medieval medical universities until roughly 1650.[1]

Feverfew lives on today as a headache—specifically migraine—remedy. In England, it had other names, for it was included in abortifacient recipes, giving it the less savory name of "kill-bastard" among some country people. It was also part of the menstrual-herb pantheon and was called maid's weed by some, owing to these attributes.

In Anglo-Saxon folk magic, this plant was curative for a specific condition known as "elf shot." In combination with red nettle and "waybread," or plantain, it was used to cure the sudden pains we call a stitch in the side. This pain was believed to have been caused by elves firing invisible arrows at unsuspecting victims. In the eleventh-century book *Lacnunga* ("Remedies"), these three plants are mixed with butter and applied to this mysterious affliction.

Feverfew continued to be used as a pain-relieving herb by the Romani community and was also used in place of chamomile, most likely because of their similar appearance. It was likewise used as a sedative tea, just as chamomile is. Feverfew also has been planted around houses to purify the air because of its strong odor, while a tincture of its blossoms is still used as an insect repellant and balm for bites.

The plant was also used to magically soothe unruly horses by the renowned horsemen of East Anglia in England who were known to have certain secrets in the world of horsemanship. According to sixteenth-century herbalist and botanist John Gerard, the method of picking feverfew must be done just so to ensure the magic of the herb remains intact. It must be harvested with the left hand specifically, while reciting aloud the name of the sufferer and at no time looking behind oneself.

This little flower was also thought to aid those suffering from melancholy, when one can barely speak from sadness. It was even used to help counteract the effects of an overindulgence of opium.

In southern Appalachia, the herb was used as a tea for its fever-breaking power and as a poultice for "fevered places." It was also used in folk hematological conditions known as "thick blood," which could include a variety of unpleasant symptoms like headaches and high blood pressure.

MODERN USES: Feverfew is often the first herb mentioned at the signs of a migraine. However, like many herbal remedies, it is important to note in what form the medicine is given and what kind of headache is being treated. Eating fresh feverfew leaf or powdered leaf (two to three leaves a day) is a proven preventative for migraines that are not chronic. The tincture can also help with chronic joint pain, arthritis, and back and neck pain.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

FEVERFEW TEA

It is best to use high-quality fresh feverfew with good color.

1 tablespoon minced fresh feverfew leaves
1 cup freshly boiled water

Place the feverfew in a glass jar and pour the freshly boiled water over the herb. Steep for 30 minutes and then strain.

Take 1 to 3 cups of the tea daily.

FEVERFEW TINCTURE

1:4, 80%: fresh flowers and leaves
1:5, 65%: dried herbs

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take up to 1 teaspoon three times per day.

FEVERFEW AND BLACK BIRCH TEA

Make a strong tea of feverfew flowers and leaves and black birch bark to use as a soak for sore joints.

½ cup fresh feverfew flowers and leaves
½ cup shredded black birch bark
About 4 cups freshly boiled water

Place the feverfew and birch bark in a 1-quart glass jar and add the hot water. Cover and steep overnight.

Strain the tea, lid and store in the fridge for 2 to 3 days.

Use this entire jar to add to a hot bath as a soak to soothe sore joints.

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1 Nancy G. Siraisi, *Avicenna in Renaissance Italy: The Canon and Medical Teaching in Italian Universities After 1500* (Princeton University Press, 2014), 18.

30. GENTIAN

GENTIANA LUTEA, G. SAPONARIA, G. VILLOSA

Gentianaceae family

CAUTION: *Use with caution in cases of overproduction of stomach acid.*

ORIGINS: The gentian species are native to both Europe (as *Gentiana lutea*) and America (as *G. saponaria, G. Villosa*). There are around 300 different species.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Gentians have opposite, smooth leaves, sometimes arranged in a rosette. They have trumpet-shaped flowers that are often purple, however some species have yellow, cream, red, or white flowers.

PART USED: leaves, roots

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: cooling

TASTE: bitter, acrid

SUBSTITUTIONS: burdock, citrus peel, dandelion

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This native plant is often not abundant, so please use mindfulness when seeking its medicine. It is best not to wildcraft this plant and instead grow it; it grows easily in gardens. Use other bitter herbs instead if you cannot find a sustainable source.

TRADITIONAL USES: In Europe, gentian has been a classic digestive bitter. Traditionally, bitters were used to soothe upset stomach, gas, bloating, and other

digestive discomforts, or before and/or after eating a rich meal. Hildegard von Bingen, the twelfth-century mystic herbalist, described the medicinal use of gentian as an aid to one "who has fever in the stomach, often drinks powdered gentian in warm wine and his stomach is cleansed of fever."[1] It has been used as a bitter tonic by ancient Arabic practitioners, as well as ancient Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians.[2]

MODERN USES: Most modern people are averse to bitter flavors, yet we are built to eat and react to bitterness in ways that help support healthy digestion. When we taste a bitter flavor, it signals the release and production of saliva, acids, enzymes, hormones, bile, and other compounds.

If you use bitters, which cool the digestive system over a long period of time, add a warming herb like ginger, calamus, or fennel. Gentian is primarily recommended for those with chronic or long illnesses, who also have low or no appetite. It is also supportive for those who have chronic fatigue or fatigue symptoms after a viral illness like mononucleosis.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

GENTIAN TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh leaves and roots
1:5, 50%: dried herbs

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Use a few drops in warm water to stimulate digestion as needed.

GENTIAN BITTERS

Other herbs that work well in these bitters are cardamom, cinnamon, dock, dandelion, orange peel, clove, and/or cinnamon.

2 tablespoons chopped dried gentian
1 teaspoon each other herbs (optional)
2 cups brandy

Place the gentian in a glass jar. Add other herbs, if using, then pour in the brandy and screw on the lid. Steep for 1 month in a cool, dark place.

Strain and cover with a lid and store in a cool, dark place. Use 1 to 3 dropperfuls in ½ cup of warm water before a meal.

1 Hildegard von Bingen. Ed. Bruce W. Hozeski. *Hildegard's Healing Plants: From Her Medieval Classic Physica,* (Beacon Press, 2002), p. 31.

2 Richard Whelan, "Gentian," Richard Whelan Medical Herbalist website, n.d., https://www.rjwhelan.co.nz/herbs%20A-Z/gentian.html.

31. GHOST PIPE, CORPSE PLANT

MONOTROPA UNIFLORA

Ericaceae family

CAUTION: *Toxicity is unknown, so proceed with caution. What some describe as an "out of body" experience can occur in tincture doses larger than 15 to 30 drops.*

ORIGINS: This beautiful plant is native to Asia, North America, and northern South America. Ghost pipe is so-named because it is without chlorophyll, which means the plant cannot photosynthesize. It also means it must get its food another way. Ghost pipe feeds off other plants nearby, in its relationship with mycorrhizal networks in the soil. It is often found in rich woods of hemlocks and pines, for the mycelium that have relationships with these conifers produce sugars that the ghost pipes feed upon. Though many people mistake the plant for a mushroom, it is indeed a plant; it simply lacks chlorophyll, giving it a spectral appearance. The plant has a large range, though it is not common; it blooms May through October.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: This is one of the most distinctive-looking plants because of its pale, white to slight pink stems. The plant has small leaves that appear to be scaly adorning its fleshy, white stems. The flowers are five-parted and hang downward, causing an almost walking cane–like curve. Ghost pipe is usually found growing in small clusters.

PART USED: Historically, only the root was used, but today only the aerial parts are used, owing to sustainability concerns.

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: anodyne, nervine

TASTE: mysterious

SUBSTITUTIONS: skullcap

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: There is a lot of debate about the sustainability of harvesting this plant for medicine, owing to its population scarcity. It is a plant to be harvested only in small amounts, very intentionally, only aboveground portions, and in areas of abundance that you have preferably stewarded for many

years. This plant is included in this book because the author has often found it at proposed building sites in wooded areas and has removed it before its total destruction from construction.

TRADITIONAL USES: This plant is an important medicine to many Indigenous people across North America. It was used historically as a poultice for sores that would not heal, and it was chewed for toothaches by the Cree.[1] It has been used in love charms or love medicine among the Kwakiutl as well. Infusions of the aboveground portions were used for soothing pains in the body that result from colds and flus, as well as fevers. In Cherokee medicine, the tea was used to wash warts and bunions.[2]

MODERN USES: Ghost pipe is often described as a pain reliever, but that is far from its real effect. This plant helps one stand beside one's pain rather than be trapped in identifying with it. That's because pain can become part of our identity, and it truly is for some of us. But this medicine in small doses helps you step out of that prison and look at the pain with new eyes. It is also helpful for people stuck in loops from LSD and other mind-altering substances, though it is by no means a trip-stopper. A tincture made from fresh aboveground stems and flowers turns a deep purple and is just as enchanting as the plant's appearance in the wild. There are often much more appropriate medicines for pain than this, and it is important for us to communicate this is not a cure-all pain reliever to herbal medicine seekers.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

GHOST PIPE TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh aboveground tops immediately after picking

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Start with 1 drop and take no more than 30 drops at time. Take the smallest effective dose every 4 hours.

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1 Anna L. Leighton, *Wild Plant Use by the Woods Cree (Nihithawak) of East-Central Saskatchewan* (National Museums of Canada, Mercury Series, 1985), 46.

2 Paul B. Hamel and Mary U. Chiltoskey, *Cherokee Plants and Their Uses: A 400 Year History* (Herald Publishing, 1975), 40.

32. GINGER

ZINGIBER OFFICINALE

Zingiberaceae family

CAUTION: *Larger than culinary doses are not recommended for people on anticoagulant drugs, antacids, and platelet aggregation inhibitors. It is also not recommended in large doses before surgery, or with peptic ulcers or reflux disease.*[1]

ORIGINS: Ginger most likely came from southeastern Asia, and specifically the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and surrounding island-nations. It was one of the first spices to be exported to Europe from Asia.[2]

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Ginger plants look much like a large, tropical grass, with lanceolate, pale green leaves. The stems can grow up to five feet tall, emerging out of the yellow-fleshed, fragrant rhizome.

PART USED: root

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: rubefacient, stimulating, digestive, carminative, warming, drying, analgesic, expectorant

TASTE: aromatic, spicy

SUBSTITUTIONS: cardamom, cayenne

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Ginger is rarely found in the wild and should be cultivated.

TRADITIONAL USES: It is called *zangabil* in Persian and is used in Iranian folk medicine as a memory and digestive tonic, an aphrodisiac, and for diluting, desiccating, and emollient of phlegmatic and compact humor sticking to body organs, stomach, intestine, brain, and throat.[3] It is extremely important in India as medicine, and was even known as a near-universal cure. It was and is used for circulation, warming the body and for digestion in Ayurveda.[4] Ginger is also one of the most useful plants in traditional Chinese medicine and has been used in different forms from fresh roots to dried, made into pills and pastes. Each

preparation has different attributes. Ginger is seen to act on the spleen, lungs, and stomach meridians in this medicine system.[5]

MODERN USES: Ginger is one of the best-known herbal remedies for stomachaches, nausea, and digestive upsets. While too much ginger can certainly be irritating, there is evidence it can aid in the prevention of ulcer formation.[6] It is also helpful with morning sickness in those who are pregnant and can be taken safely by many in pregnancy.[7] Ginger brings warmth to the outer surfaces of the body, which is one reason it is a supportive herb for those with cold symptoms.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

GINGER SYRUP

1 cup finely chopped fresh ginger
2 cups water
1 cup honey

Place the ginger in a medium saucepan and add the water. Set over medium-low heat and simmer until the water is reduced by half. Let the decoction cool until warm but not hot, then strain the liquid into a jar.

Add the honey and stir until well combined, seal with the lid and allow to cool. Store in the fridge for up to 3 months. Use the syrup by the tablespoon for upset stomachs, as well as for a tasty topping for pancakes and ice cream or a marinade or salad dressing.

GINGER ROOT TINCTURE

1:2, 80%: fresh root

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Dosage recommendations vary widely. Start out with 15 to 30 drops in a little water and increase to up to 60 drops three times a day. Discontinue if you notice heartburn or further stomach upset.

Caution: *Do not take large doses while pregnant.*

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1 Sharol Marie Tilgner, *Herbal Medicine from the Heart of the Earth*, 2nd ed. (Wise Acres, 2009), 91–93.

2 "*Zingiber officinale* Roscoe," in *Kew Science: Plants of the World Online*, 2017, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, https://www.powo.science.kew.org.

3 L. Khodaie and O. Sadeghpoor, "Ginger from Ancient Times to the New Outlook," *Jundishapur Journal of Natural Pharmacological Products* 10, no. 1 (2015): e18402.

4 J. Bruton-Seal and M. Seal, *Kitchen Medicine: Household Remedies for Common Ailments* (Merlin Unwin Books, 2020).

5 Cheng Zhang et al., "Pharmacological Activity and Clinical Application Analysis of Traditional Chinese Medicine Ginger from the Perspective of One Source and Multiple Substances," *Chinese Medical Journal* 19, no. 1 (2024): 97.

6 R. Haniadka et al., "A Review of the Gastroprotective Effects of Ginger (*Zingiber officinale* Roscoe)," *Food & Function Journal* 4, no. 6 (2013): 845–55.

7 A. M. Bode and Z. Dong, "The Amazing and Mighty Ginger," in *Herbal Medicine: Biomolecular and Clinical Aspects*, ed. I. F. F. Benzie and S. Wachtel-Galor, 2nd ed. (CRC Press/Taylor & Francis, 2011), chap. 7; available from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK92775/.

33. GINKGO

GINKGO BILOBA

Ginkgoaceae family

CAUTION: *Do not take with anticoagulants.*

ORIGINS: This tree is one of the oldest tree species in the world and has a fascinating history. Originally from China, the gingko has both male and female species. The tree has largely gone unchanged in its long evolutionary history because of its incredible ability to resist stressors in its environment. The name *gingko* comes from a mistranslation of the Japanese name *yin-kwo* ("silver fruit"). Gingko trees are living enchantments, as their average lifespan can be as much as 1,000 years.

PART USED: leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: astringent, stimulating, anticoagulant, nootropic, anti-inflammatory

TASTE: bitter, pungent, sour

SUBSTITUTIONS: gotu kola

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This plant is largely grown as an ornamental, so be aware of sprays, exhaust fumes, and other contaminants that may have affected it. Be careful not to remove the spur as you harvest the leaves, lest you damage future leaf growth. Be sure to leave any gingko tree you harvest from as if you had never been there.

TRADITIONAL USES: In traditional Chinese medicine, ginkgo has been used to treat circulation issues. The fruit has been considered much more important medicinally than the leaves in Eastern medicine traditions generally. The roasted seeds have been used in desserts in China, Korea, and Japan. In Korea, the tree's nuts are known as *eunhaeng* (은행) In East Asia, the trees have been considered culturally sacred and significant, in different traditions and included in rituals to represent longevity, resilience, and health, owing to their own long lifespan and

miraculous lifeways. The gingko tree has been incorporated into many Shinto and Buddhist shrines.

MODERN USES: Ginkgo is a cardiac stimulant, standing out as one of the few herbs that accomplishes this important action without heat. Heating actions in herbs often present as spicy, hot, or pungent tastes and smells in the form of volatile oils or other compounds, but ginkgo helps support circulation to the extremities without this characteristic. Conditions like erectile dysfunction or Raynaud's disease need support with this type of circulatory stimulation and can greatly benefit from ginkgo. More commonly, gingko is known for its mental clarity and enhancement properties, especially when paired with other herbs like gotu kola. It is helpful for memory and attention span when taken tonically, and it is also often used in formulas for tinnitus, dizziness, and migraines.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

GINGKO TINCTURE

1:5, 60%: dried green and yellow leaves

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 60 drops two to three times a day.

Note: Most modern studies have been done on very concentrated ethanol extracts of ginkgo nuts and to best access the mental clarity aspects of this plant; home apothecary setups are not often adequate to create these concentrates.

34. GINSENG

PANAX SPP.

Araliaceae family

CAUTION: *Do not take with warfarin. Do not take with anticoagulants. Do not take large doses if you have schizophrenia or are bipolar, as it can initiate manic states.*

ORIGINS: Ginseng grows in China and Korea, as well as in North America. The English word *ginseng* comes from the Hokkien Chinese *jîn-sim* (人蔘). The disparate plant populations are remnants from when the supercontinent Pangea connected Appalachia to eastern Asia.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Ginseng grows low to the ground and does not usually exceed 15 inches in height. It has three or four branches of leaflets in a circle around a central stem. The leaves are palmately compound and look somewhat like a hand with three larger leaflets and two smaller ones forming each "hand." The plant has small spidery white flowers and a brilliant cluster of red berries in the autumn.

PART USED: root, leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: tonic, warming, stimulating

TASTE: spicy

SUBSTITUTIONS: eleuthero (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*)

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: The plant is severely overharvested; *please do not wildcraft.* In the fall, if you find leaves, taking one leaf per plant to tincture can be ethical, but please be mindful.

TRADITIONAL USES: Ginseng is an incredibly important and sacred plant wherever it grows. It is mentioned in many East Asian texts, but mention of it first appeared in the *Shen Nong Pharmacopoeia*, written in China in 196 CE. It was not touted as a general tonic, as it often is today in Chinese medicine, but it was specifically called for to treat patients with chronic or long-term illnesses.

In folk medicinal lore around the world, when a root resembles a human, it has been assumed to be a panacea: good for every part of the human body. North American Indigenous folk practitioners used ginseng as a tonic and medicine for everything from hives to tuberculosis. It was also used as an aphrodisiac. In China and Korea, where each country has its own species, there is an over 5,000-year history of use as a cure-all for everything from digestive disorders, to cancer, to vitality and longevity.

In North America, the early settlers did not value the local ginseng, *Panax quinquefolius*, as highly as did Indigenous peoples. It was instead valued as an export to Asian markets, where it was in great demand and fetched a high price. Unfortunately, this business led to the wild overharvesting and ultimate destruction of its population in the wild.

MODERN USES: Ginseng has inspired many "herban" legends, and combined with its rarity, it is hard to know when it is best to use. The plant's wild populations are so overharvested that it is most often best to skip using the herb and seek a more abundant and sustainable one to meet your desired medical need. The way in which ginseng is especially helpful is not as an "energy booster" for the average healthy person but, rather, a treatment for folks with chronic illnesses or long-term sickness. Using the root or leaf tincture appropriately is a great way to experience the tonic actions of ginseng. The herb does not cure specific symptoms so much as acts on the limbic system; it's known as an adaptogen, helping promote and restore balance in the body.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

FARM-GROWN GINSENG ROOT TINCTURE

1:5, 70%: dried roots (farmed roots only)

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 20 to 40 drops two to three times a day.

FRESH GINSENG LEAF TINCTURE

Make this in the fall, after the plant berries, allowing the roots to go undisturbed. You can make an amazing tincture from just the leaves.

1:2 95%: fresh leaves

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 10 to 30 drops three times a day for fatigue after a long illness.

35. GOLDENROD

SOLIDAGO SPP.

Asteraceae family

CAUTION: *Some people respond with dermatitis to aster family plants and can be strongly allergic.*

ORIGINS: Goldenrod is a common aster family plant that is native to North America, Mexico, Eurasia, and South America. The family has 100 to 120 species, and many have been introduced in Europe, and so goldenrod is now naturalized in many other places around the world. It is considered invasive in some places.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Goldenrod has a tall stem adorned with a plume of brilliant yellow flowers; it is commonly seen along roadsides and in forest edges near open fields. The leaves are willow-like and thin with shallow teeth. When the leaves are crushed, some species smell almost carrot-like.

PART USED: flowers, leaves, roots

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: diuretic, cleansing, warm, dry, tonifying, astringent

TASTE: bitter, pungent, aromatic

SUBSTITUTIONS: dandelion

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This plant often grows in dense, thick patches, allowing for sustainable harvest of the aerial parts; this is especially true for *S.*

canadensis. Certain species are rarer, such as sweet goldenrod (*S. odora*), which is much less common and should be harvested with much more caution, or simply grown at home.

TRADITIONAL USES: Goldenrod has had extensive uses in all its countries of origin. Tea from goldenrod leaves and flowers has been used for a wide variety of medicinal purposes by Indigenous people in the Americas; its use as a kidney and bladder medicine especially was exchanged with settlers and enslaved peoples in North America in the eighteenth century. Goldenrod is bitter, warming, and pungent, which has made it ideal for old wounds, sores on the legs and scalp, and as a good kidney medicine. Cherokee peoples have used the aerials for rheumatism, digestion, headaches, and open wounds. The root has been used as an astringent remedy for burns, usually as a tea or poultice. The tea was also used in Black folk medicine in the South, particularly for fevers.[1]

The genus name *Solidago* means "whole," which most likely refers to its healing properties. Some scholars say that the name comes from the phrase *in solidum ago vulnera*, or "It consolidate wounds." Another old name for goldenrod was *woundwort.* The galls formed from a grub living inside the stalks were carried to prevent rheumatic pain. Known as "rheumaty-buds," these little galls were cruelly believed to be effective only as long as the little bug was still alive inside—a tradition practiced in Southern folk medicine up until very recently.[2]

MODERN USES: Goldenrod has a bad reputation as a late-summer allergen, when in fact it is ragweed (*Ambrosia* spp.) that is the culprit.[3] The pollen of goldenrod is too heavy and sticky to become airborne and affect us; it is this stickiness that causes insects to be the main purveyors of this weighty pollen. But this does not mean that no one is allergic to goldenrod, topically or internally.

Goldenrod is a fortifier of membranes and so it helps strengthen the respiratory and urinary tracts, rather than acting directly as an antiseptic or antimicrobial. Tea made from the aerial parts also acts as a diuretic, helping remove excess water from the body, which is especially useful in cases of edema.

It is also effective at removing debris from the body after general infections or illness.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

GOLDENROD HONEY

1 cup chopped dried goldenrod leaves and flowers
2 cups raw honey

Place the goldenrod in a glass jar and cover with the honey, ensuring no plant parts are sticking above the honey. Close with the lid and steep for 2 to 4 weeks.

When ready to strain, a couple of hours ahead, place the jar in a sunny window to warm the honey. Lay a piece of muslin cloth in a medium bowl and pour in the honey mixture. Lift up the corners of the muslin and tie together, then suspend over a medium bowl to strain overnight. Rinse the jar and dry.

Pour the strained honey back into the pint jar and close with the lid. Store indefinitely in a cool, dark place.

Add a teaspoon of this honey to a tea like mint or yarrow for treating a respiratory illness.

Note: After straining, you can make a tea with the honey-covered bits of goldenrod. After all, you don't want to waste any of that golden goodness.

GOLDENROD TEA

1 tablespoon dried goldenrod leaves and flowers
1 cup freshly boiled water

Place the goldenrod in a quart glass jar and add the hot water. Steep for 30 minutes.

Pour the tea through a fine-mesh strainer into a large glass measuring cup. Rinse the jar and add the strained tea. Cover and store in the refrigerator 2 to 3 days.

Drink up to 6 cups of the tea a day for respiratory infections and urinary tract infections.

GOLDENROD TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh flowering tops
1:5, 40%: dried herb

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 1 dropperful two to three times a day for allergies, UTIs, or respiratory infections.

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1 Stephanie Y. Mitchem, *African American Folk Healing* (NYU Press, 2007), 16.

2 Fanny D. Bergen, *Animal and Plant Lore: Collected from the Oral Tradition of English Speaking Folk* (Houghton Mifflin, 1899), 99.

3 Tom Seymour, *Foraging New England: Edible Wild Food and Medicinal Plants from Maine to the Adirondacks to Long Island Sound* (Falcon Guides, 2013), 157.

36. GOLDENSEAL

HYDRASTIS CANADENSIS

Ranunculaceae family

CAUTION: *This plant is much endangered and should never be taken from the wild. Do not use while pregnant or breastfeeding. Prolonged use inhibits absorption of vitamin B. Do not use if you have diabetes or high blood pressure. Do not take as a single herb for longer than two weeks.*[1]

ORIGINS: Goldenseal is an iconic medicinal woodland plant of the North American Southeast. It is an important plant for Indigenous peoples throughout the eastern woodlands and is among the beautiful plants that produce delicate flowers in the early spring.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Goldenseal's tender, light green leaves look almost like a maple leaf with lots of little teeth around the edges, atop a single stalk. The plant grows low to the ground and bears a small, spidery white flower that gives way to a bright red raspberry-like fruit.

PART USED: root

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: tonic, alterative, bitter, digestive, antibacterial, antiseptic, drying

TASTE: bitter, acrid

SUBSTITUTIONS: yellowroot, barberry, Oregon grape root (use these alternatives whenever possible because of goldenseal's scarcity)

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: *Do not wild-harvest goldenseal*; its wild populations are very limited owing to overharvesting. Grow the plant in a garden or seek farmed plants from reputable growers.

TRADITIONAL USES: This plant is first and foremost an important part of Indigenous medicine tradition. This alone should prevent people from overharvesting it, but sadly that is not the case. Among many Eastern Nation peoples, it has been used as a wash for eye issues and infections, plus as a soothing wash for wounds. Goldenseal has been used to make a beautiful golden dye, and it has been used as a digestive remedy or to treat gastric ulcers, as well as upper respiratory infections.[2] It has been a traditional cancer remedy in Cherokee communities. The Micmac and Iroquois Nation peoples have used it for chapped or cut lips, and as a digestive aid.[3]

Goldenseal became an important part of the Appalachian folk medicine tradition after colonization. A traditional Appalachian use for goldenseal was mixing it with honey, sage, and alum to make a syrup to put on cankers. Like many other bitter plants, goldenseal became a key part of the tonic tradition. This tonic tradition is the practice of using strongly flavored or scented plants to "move the blood" in springtime.

Tommie Bass, the legendary Alabama herbalist, recommended yellowroot (*Xanthorhiza simplicissima*), dandelion, gentian, and goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*) as excellent tonics. These are strongly bitter, revealing the healing notions associated with strong-tasting plants. Goldenseal was not commonly called by that name until the followers of American herbalist Samuel Thomson began to call it such; before that, it was most often called yellowroot—not to be confused with what is today called yellowroot.[4]

MODERN USES: This is a very rare and overharvested plant. That being said, it is a beautiful medicine; goldenseal really shines when aiding in problems of irritated mucous membranes, and fungal infections. An infusion or diluted decoction is excellent for vaginal discharge and itching, as well as a yeast infection. Goldenseal tincture and decoction are helpful for thrush and throat infections, especially as a gargle.

The infusion is also a wonderful eye wash for conjunctivitis and sties. Goldenseal is also a mild uterine stimulator and can be used for heavy menstrual bleeding. Taken internally, it stimulates digestion, tonifies the digestive tract with its bitterness and astringency, and soothes infections of the urinary tract. It is best used as a local antibiotic, meaning it works well when it can come into contact with the infection being addressed.

The plant's yellow color derives from an alkaloid compound known as berberine, which has a strong antibacterial effect. Just like with most herbs, goldenseal seems to work most powerfully when not extracted for a lone compound but, rather, when used as a whole-plant medicine. Though goldenseal has powerful antibiotic action, when taking it internally it is equally important to also take a probiotic to keep the gut flora healthy and thriving.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

GOLDENSEAL ROOT POWDER

Use the powder on external wounds and lacerations (not puncture wounds, though, as you do not want to introduce material into these wounds, which could cause infection), especially where pus is present. Soak the wound in warm Epsom-salted water to clean thoroughly and then pat the wound dry with a paper towel. Apply a generous sprinkle of the powder to the clean, dry wound. Soak again in warm salted water every 6 hours and apply a new dressing each time to curb infection.

GOLDENSEAL TINCTURE

1:5, 60%: dried farm-grown roots

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 10 to 30 drops three times a day.

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1 Thomas Easley and Steven Horne, *The Modern Herbal Dispensatory: A Medicine-Making Guide* (North Atlantic Books, 2016), 240.

2 Sudip Kumar Mandal et al., "Goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis* L.) and Its Active Constituents: A Critical Review of Their Efficacy and Toxicological Issues," *Pharmacological Research* 160 (October 2020): 105085.

3 R. Frank Chandler et al., "Herbal Remedies of the Maritime Indians," *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 1, no. 1 (1979): 578.

4 Andrew Pengelly, “Goldenseal, ‘*Hydrastis Canadensis:*’” An Appalachian Plant Monograph,” Tai Sophia Institute, https://plantshoe.frec.vt.edu/documents/Hydrastis_canadensis_Extended_Monograph.pdf.

37. GOTU KOLA, BRAHMI, MANDUKAPARNI

CENTELLA ASIATICA

Apiaceae family

CAUTION: *Avoid while in pregnancy and while on blood thinners.*

ORIGINS: Gotu kola is native to most tropical and subtropical countries with wet environments. It is found in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Madagascar, South Africa, the South Pacific, and eastern Europe.[1]

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Gotu kola is a rapidly spreading, low-growing herbaceous plant with cordate, or heart-shaped, leaves. The leaves have a few soft teeth on their lobes and a long petiole with no hairs.

PART USED: leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: cooling

TASTE: pungent, neutral

SUBSTITUTIONS: rosemary

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Gotu kola grows abundantly in moist areas. The leaves can be snipped, being mindful to not overharvest. Gotu kola can be grown in a container very easily with adequate watering!

TRADITIONAL USES: Gotu kola is also known as *mandukparni*, or Indian pennywort, and has been a part of the Ayurvedic tradition of India for thousands of years. In this medical system, gotu kola is recommended for treatment of various skin conditions such as leprosy, as well as lupus, varicose ulcers, eczema, psoriasis, diarrhea, fever, amenorrhea, and diseases of the female genitourinary tract.[2] In the Philippines, it has been used for headaches, fevers, wounds, and dysentery. It has been used in Fijian folk medicine as an abortifacient and for postpartum weakness.[3]

MODERN USES: Gotu kola is an herb with an incredible array of healing powers. It is generally useful for wounds and skin issues. Research has even

recently discovered that gotu kola is helpful in leprosy, or Hansen's disease. This herb acts on connective tissues and collagen production, as well and being helpful for healing surgery scars and broken bones. A warm plant poultice or strong tea for soaking is excellent for painful skin eruptions like herpes sores, lichen planus, psoriasis, and eczema, especially for scratched and generally irritated skin.

Gotu kola supports focus and mental clarity. In India, it is used to elevate the mind while meditating and to support feelings and thoughts of compassion. Combined with ginkgo, it aids concentration, study, and focus and gives ADHD support.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

GOTU KOLA TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh leaves
1:5, 50%: dried herb

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take ½ to 1 teaspoon three times a day.

GOTU KOLA HEALING OIL

This oil can be added to a salve recipe with other herbs or used alone. It is especially good for supporting the healing scars and wounds. Remember to use a good-quality oil and to ensure your herbs are not too wet and your oil does not go rancid.

1 cup organic olive oil
1 cup chopped dried or well-wilted gotu kola leaves

Place the olive oil and herbs in a food processor and process until smooth. Pour the puree into the top of a double boiler. Place some water in the lower pot of the double boiler and place over medium-low heat. Gently heat without simmering the mixture for at least 3 hours, and preferably a bit more. (I tend to do 5 to 7 hours.)

Pour the oil through a strainer into a glass jar, close with the lid, and store in a cool, dry place for up to 8 months.

Rub a dab of the oil on keloids, surgery scars, tender hurt tissues, and small wounds, as needed. Use a cotton swab when applying to avoid contaminating the oil with any bacteria.

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1 D. Bown, *Encyclopaedia of Herbs and Their Uses* (Dorling Kindersley, 1995), 361–65.

2 B. Brinkhaus et al., "Chemical, Pharmacological and Clinical Profile of the East Asian Medical Plant *Centella asiatica*," *Phytomedicine* 7, no. 5 (2000): 427–48.

3 David Bruce Leonard, “Gotu Kola (*Centella asiatica*),” HerbRally website, n.d., www.herbrally.com/monographs/gotu-kola.

38. GROUND IVY, GIL OVER THE GROUND, ALEHOOF, CREEPING CHARLIE

GLECHOMA HEDEREACA

Lamiaceae family

CAUTION: *Not recommended for use during pregnancy.*

ORIGINS: Ground ivy is native to Asia and Europe. It was introduced into America in the 1690s. The genus name *Glechoma* is a rough translation in Greek of "pennyroyal," another small-leaved, aromatic mint family member. It is considered a weed in North America and in other places where it has naturalized in the temperate world.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: This low-growing plant has opposite leaves that are rounded and simply toothed. The flowers are violet purple and lipped. The whole plants yields a strong oregano-like fragrance when crushed.

PART USED: leaves, flowers

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: cooling, drying, diaphoretic, expectorant, nervine

TASTE: bitter, aromatic, pungent

SUBSTITUTIONS: catnip

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Ground ivy is widely available as a readily spreading, nonnative weed in North America. Harvest it freely. If you live in its native ranges, ethical harvesting is possible with careful observation of its populations.

TRADITIONAL USES: Ground ivy is a celebrated healer of the sinuses. Many headaches and ringing in the ears are due to pressure building up in the sinuses. Ground ivy works to address sinus infections, thus also aiding in these ailments. It has also been used historically in Europe for "painter's colic," or lead poisoning. The plant would be eaten or made into a tea to treat the many serious and unpleasant symptoms of this once common ailment. It was also used for general lack of appetite or poor digestion. The tea was used in England for sciatica pain and other types of nerve pain. It was also an important ingredient in

herbal beers and ales as a bitter agent until the standardization of hops in brewing practice.

In Southern Black folk medicine, tea made from ground ivy was used as a digestive aid to soothe colicky babies. The tea is a gentle medicine and was also used in general for fevers, allergies, and respiratory illnesses of all types, especially in children. It was also given to adults as a tea for nervousness, anxiety, and headaches. Externally, it was applied as a poultice to wounds, abrasions, and rashes and was used as an eye wash for conjunctivitis. It was also infused in oil and applied as an ointment for sprains and bruises.

In China, ground ivy has been traditionally used for toothaches and earaches. It is also made into a juice that is combined with honey to heal old ulcers and wounds or sores. It has additionally been used for respiratory illnesses with phlegm and for internal bruising or trauma.

MODERN USES: Many of the traditional uses of ground ivy are still used today. It is effective as both a tincture and a tea for different purposes. Try a tincture of the fresh plant for some types of tinnitus and many types of sinus infections. The tea is better as an addition to tea blends for fever and respiratory problems; combining yarrow, spearmint, elderflower, and ground ivy in equal parts makes a wonderful fever tea. Ground ivy tea is also good for indigestion, gas, and bloating after meals. It is safe as a weak tea for children and can be helpful for colic and gas as well. It is helpful for urinary tract infections, but be sure to add some moistening herbs, as it is very drying; marshmallow root help with the discomfort of urination.[1]

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

GROUND IVY TEA

1 teaspoon dried ground ivy
2 cups freshly boiled water
Honey (optional)

Place the ground ivy in a glass jar and pour the freshly boiled water over it. Steep 20 minutes, strain, and take a ½ cup every 2 hours for acute symptoms. Store any excess in the fridge in a glass jar up to 3 days.

GROUND IVY WILD SODA

The dandelion blossoms here add more natural yeast. You can also add fresh mint leaves or monarda blossoms or other fragrant or flavorful herbs. Indeed, you can make so many flavors and kinds of fermented beverages like this.

¼ to ½ cup chopped fresh ground ivy
3 to 9 fresh dandelion blossoms
1 sprig of peppermint (optional)
2 cups raw honey
1 to 2 cups water

Place the ground ivy, dandelion blossoms, and peppermint, if using, in a 1-quart glass jar. Add the honey, then fill the jar the rest of the way with the water. Stir well with a wooden spoon. Cover with a loose-fitting lid to let the CO2 produced by the fermentation escape or rubber band on a very clean cloth. To avoid any mess, place the jar in a baking pan to catch any overflow. Put into a place out of direct sunlight to ferment for 5 days, occasionally "burping" the jar by letting the gas out if you have a screw-on lid.

Taste the soda on the fifth day. It should have a complex and exciting flavor and be slightly effervescent. Strain out the plant bits and compost them. Rinse the jar and pour the soda back into the jar or into a pop-top soda bottle. Place it in the fridge and continue to monitor. Just watch for any mold forming and drink within a few weeks, as it will continue to slowly ferment in the fridge.

Enjoy this refreshing beverage in the summer. Sip on it when you have a summer cold or flu. You can mix it with mineral water for a healthful mocktail, served with lemon.

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1 Author conversations with Abby Artemisia, of the Wander School.

39. HAWTHORN

CRATAEGUS SPP.

Rosaceae family

CAUTION: *Theoretically, hawthorn is not to be used by those with low blood pressure owing to its effects on the heart. In general, it is a safe herb.*

ORIGINS: The genus name, *Crataegus*, comes from the Greek word *kratos*, meaning "strength," and *akis*, for "sharp," which is a reference to its thorns. There are 280 known species, with 200 hailing from North America alone. Hawthorn also occurs in Asia, northwest Africa, and Europe.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Hawthorn is a thorny tree that can grow from 15 to 50 feet tall. The leaves are toothed, like all members of the rose family, but are variable in shape. The five-petaled flowers are most often white but can have pink and red hues. They bear red pome fruits.

PART USED: leaves, flowers, berries

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: antioxidant, cardiotonic, mild astringent, hypotensive, anti-arrhythmic, diuretic; the berries are considered moistening, while the flowers and leaves are drying and astringent

TASTE: sour, sweet, astringent

SUBSTITUTIONS: motherwort

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This tree can be incredibly abundant in fruit and flower, but remember that every flower taken is a fruit not realized. Please harvest sparingly and leave behind no trace of your presence.

TRADITIONAL USES: There are many species of hawthorn, almost all of which have been culturally significant medicines. They have been used in Chinese medicine—namely the northern Chinese hawthorn (*Crataegus pinnatifida, bei shanzha*) and the southern Chinese hawthorn (*C. cuneata, nan shanzha*). Hawthorn has been used to help relieve food stagnation and indigestion symptoms resulting from eating heavy meals. It has also been used to help maintain blood pressure. In Arabic traditional medicine, the native Middle

Eastern hawthorn (*C. aronia syn. Azarolus*), has been used to treat cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, and sexual weakness by way of a decoction of leaves and unripe fruits.[1]

In ancient Rome and Greece, hawthorn was used as a berry plaster to draw out thorns and splinters. It was also useful for dysentery and leucorrhea. English folk medicine followed the wisdom of antiquity and added powdered berries to wine for treating kidney stones, dropsy, or edema.[2] It was also called on to help with loose teeth and dysentery. The powdered berries were given for excessive menstruation as well. When mixed with violet syrup and water, hawthorn was given to those suffering from the plague and fever.[3]

MODERN USES: Hawthorn is an indispensable medicine for heart health. Its cardioprotective qualities help protect the heart from free radical damage, as it is are so rich in antioxidants and contains other powerful compounds that support heart health. If one has a history of heart disease or cardiac events in the family or personally, a hawthorn tonic is a splendid idea. Hawthorn is also a great medicine to help protect the aging heart. It combines beautifully with lemon balm, linden, and motherwort, each of which has nervine and hypotensive properties.

Hawthorn medicine is generally gentle and can be taken in large doses over long periods of time. The blood vessels benefit greatly from the strengthening effect of this powerful, thorny tree. It is also helpful for the discomfort of angina when taken along with Western medicine. The Chinese species is particularly sour and more aligned with uses as indigestion remedies.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

HAWTHORN FRUIT DECOCTION

½ cup fresh hawthorn berries
4 cups water
Honey (optional)

Place the berries in a medium saucepan and add the water. Put the saucepan over medium-low heat, cover and simmer for 30 minutes on very low heat.

Sweeten with honey, if desired, after straining out the fruit. Pour the decoction into a 1-quart glass jar, cover with the lid, and store in the fridge for 2 to 3 days.

Take the drink in ½ cup doses throughout the day for circulation issues and grief.

HAWTHORN OXYMEL

2 cups crushed dried hawthorn berries
2 cups organic apple cider vinegar
2 cups raw honey

Place the berries in a half-gallon glass jar and add the vinegar and honey. Place a piece of wax paper on the top and close with the lid. Allow to steep in a cool, dark place for 2 to 4 weeks.

Strain out the fruit and store for up to 8 months in the fridge.

Take the oxymel in 1 teaspoon doses in warm water one to three times a day as a circulatory aid or for pleasure! Just remember to rinse your mouth with plain water after ingesting the vinegar to protect tooth enamel.

Note: Don't toss the berries just yet! You can make a decoction from the strained berries. You can also blend the strained fruits to make a delicious sauce for meat or mushrooms, or use as a salad dressing.

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1 P. Ljubuncic et al., "Antioxidant Activity of *Crataegus aronia* Aqueous Extract Used in Traditional Arab Medicine in Israel," *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 101, nos. 1–3 (2005): 153–61.

2 Nicholas Culpeper, *Culpeper's English Physician and Complete Herbal* (H. Richardson, 1801), 71.

3 Leonhart Fuchs, *De historia stirpium commentarii insignes, maximis impensis et vigiliis elaborati, adiectis earundem vivis plusquam quingentis imaginibus, nunquam antea ad naturae imitationem artificiosius effectis & expressis* (In Officina Isingriniana, 1542), 543.

40. HONEYSUCKLE

LONICERA JAPONICA

Caprifoliaceae family

CAUTION: *The berries of honeysuckle are toxic. Not all honeysuckle plants are used in the same ways medicinally, and some varieties are toxic.*

ORIGINS: One of the most widely used medicinal herbs in the world, honeysuckle is a powerful antimicrobial originally from Japan, China, and other temperate parts of East Asia and far eastern Russia. It has been used in Chinese medicine for thousands of years, where it is called *jin yin hua.* Honeysuckle is now widespread and considered invasive in many other countries, including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Mexico, and New Zealand. It was introduced in the United States in the early 1800s, and now is considered an invasive plant in many places where it has naturalized, in North America and beyond.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Honeysuckle has a unique tubular, slender flower that is both cream and yellow. The vines are reddish, thin, and pliable when young but mature to a tan, thicker, and more papery texture as they grow. The leaves are small and smooth-margined, teardrop-shaped and opposite one another on the vine. Honeysuckle often climbs other plants, trees, fences, and anything else in its path.

PART USED: flowers, unopened flower buds, leaves, stems

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: diuretic, antispasmodic, expectorant, laxative; promotes vomiting (emetic)

TASTE: sweet, bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: forsythia

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Harvest the flowers as they begin to bud and freshly open. This plant is not native and is often invasive where it grows outside of eastern Asia. Harvest freely and pull back the vines as you go to reclaim habitat for the native plants. The vines also make wonderful baskets and plant fibers.

TRADITIONAL USES: Honeysuckle has been used in Chinese medicine for myriad conditions, including remedying serious infections and for cosmetic reasons. The medicinal use of the flowers was first mentioned in early Chinese herbals dating back to between 1163 and 1224 CE, from the Nan-Song dynasty.[1] It was and still is used to treat chronic enteritis, pneumonia, acute tonsillitis, nephritis, acute mastitis, and leptospirosis.[2]

Honeysuckle was also thought to reduce blood pressure and can be used as an anti-inflammatory, a mild diuretic, and as an antispasmodic. Many of the incredibly kept classical Chinese herbal medicine manuals mention it as a remedy for things as serious as late-stage syphilis, ulcers and sores, childbirth wounds, heat conditions, and sore throats. In Japanese Kampo medicine, it was used to treat inflammatory and infectious diseases. Honeysuckle has traditionally been used to treat influenza, respiratory illnesses, and other inflammatory conditions in all its places of origin.

MODERN USES: Honeysuckle is used for its antibacterial properties today just as it was in history. Chinese research shows that jin yin hua ("silver and gold flowers") inhibits tuberculosis. The flower buds of honeysuckle are used to treat feverish conditions and diarrhea, owing to their antibacterial nature. The flower buds of Japanese honeysuckle make a great infusion at the first signs of a feverish cold or sore throat. A tincture made from the flowers, stems, and buds can help with food poisoning and its gastrointestinal symptoms.

Honeysuckle tincture or tea is helpful for urinary tract infections and can be mixed with usnea, goldenrod, or oregano tincture to help with this troublesome malady. Honeysuckle also helps with head colds of all varieties, especially sinus infections. Similarly, it is helpful for ear infections that result from phlegmy respiratory infections. The tea made from the buds and flowers can be quite bitter; mix it with mint, lemon balm, or tulsi to help with the taste and add more antiviral and antibacterial magic.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

HONEYSUCKLE AND FORSYTHIA TINCTURE

The addition of forsythia flowers to the honeysuckle flowers here yields a tincture for colds, flus, and other hot, feverish respiratory conditions.

1 cup chopped fresh honeysuckle flowers
1 cup chopped fresh forsythia flowers
About 1 cup high-proof (95% or more) alcohol

Place the honeysuckle flowers and forsythia flowers in a 1-pint glass jar and add enough of the alcohol to generously cover all the petals. Cover and steep for 4 to 8 weeks in a cool, dark place.

Pour the tincture through a fine-mesh strainer into a small amber glass bottle with a lid. Close the bottle and store in a dark place until ready to use. (The amber glass helps protect the medicine from UV light damage and degradation.)

Take 1 to 2 dropperfuls three times a day for respiratory illnesses and sore throats.

HONEYSUCKLE OXYMEL

2 cups fresh honeysuckle flowers
¾ cup organic apple cider vinegar
¾ cup honey

Place the flowers into a glass jar. Add the vinegar and honey, then stir well with a wooden spoon. Cover with the lid and let sit in a cool, dark place for 2 weeks, stirring a couple of times a week.

Strain and store in a glass jar with a lid either protected by wax paper from the corrosive power of the vinegar or a BPA-free plastic one. Store in a cool dark place 6 to 8 months.

Take 1 teaspoon of the oxymel for coughs, colds, and flu symptoms up to six times a day.

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1 S. Foster and C. X. Yue, *Herbal Emissaries: Bringing Chinese Herbs to the West* (Healing Arts Press, 1992).

2 X. Shang et al., "*Lonicera japonica* Thunb.: Ethnopharmacology, Phytochemistry and Pharmacology of an Important Traditional Chinese Medicine," *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 138, no. 1 (2011): 1–21.

41. HOPS

HUMULUS LUPULUS

Cannabaceae family

CAUTION: *Some people who have depression may find this plant medicine to be a further depressant.*

ORIGINS: China is most likely the place of origin for the three species that eventually spread to Europe.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Hops are the flower of the hop plant, a vining plant with three lobbed leaves. Hop can also have a variety of other leaf shapes on its sticky, hairy vines. The vines are actually covered in stiff, downward-facing hairs that cause them to feel quite rough. The vines will always wind in a clockwise direction! Female plants produce many cone-like flowers, or strobiles.

PART USED: strobiles (flowers)

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: digestive, sedative, nervine, soporific, antispasmodic, aromatic

TASTE: bitter, cooling

SUBSTITUTIONS: California poppy

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: generally cultivated

TRADITIONAL USES: Hop plants have been growing alongside humans for a very long time. The name *hop* is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word *hoppan*, meaning "to climb." The species name *lupulus* means "small wolf," which refers to the plant's ability to climb on other plants, much as a wolf would overtake a sheep.[1] Though the plant's exact history of use is not known, its entry into the world of beer brewing was most likely a result of its antibacterial benefits at a time when drinking water was not always safe. Hops are first mentioned in 736 CE as being used in beer brewing, particularly in a monastery document from the Hallertau region of Bavaria, Germany.[2]

Hops were used medicinally throughout Europe and Asia to treat such diverse problems as leprosy, toothaches, fevers, gastric problems, and anxiety. The plant was also used as a preservative, deodorant, and even as feed for cattle. Hops are best known in Ayurvedic medicine in India for treating restlessness, and in traditional Chinese medicine for insomnia, stomach upset and cramping, and lack of appetite.

MODERN USES: Hops are best known in beer brewing, but they are incredibly useful medicinally. The flowers are stimulating to the digestion as an infusion and are also a muscle relaxant. They stimulate the release of gastric juices and act anti-spasmodically. This makes hops a helpful addition to formulas for menstrual cramps, asthmatic tension, and colic. The tincture of hops is an easy way to dose the medicine for anxiety, for upset stomach, or sluggish digestion.

Hops and nervine are often mixed with other nervine herbs like California poppy, tulsi, lemon balm, and milky oats to soothe frazzled nerves. A warm infusion made from hops can also help calm anxiety-induced insomnia. Hops are antiseptic and can be used as a wound wash when prepared as an infusion. They also have estrogenic properties and have been successfully used to treat hot flashes during menopause.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

HOPS TEA

1 teaspoon dried hops
1 cup freshly boiled water
Honey (optional)

Place the hops in a glass jar and pour the water over the herb and cover. Steep for 30 minutes, and then strain. Store any excess in the fridge for 2 to 3 days.

Sip this tea before bedtime to calm the nerves and chase off insomnia.

HERBAL SLEEP PILLOW

You can also add lavender buds, if you want to scent this beautifully. It's wonderful as a sweet craft to make with kids.

1 cup dried hops
1 clean sock or little cloth pillow

Gently stuff the hops into the sock and secure the opening. You can do this by tying a string around it. Place the pillow in your pillowcase or where it will be near your face while you sleep.

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1 *Medico-Chirurgical Review and Journal of Medical Science* (Burgess and Hill, 1837), 148.

2 Ian S. Hornsey, *A History of Beer and Brewing* (Royal Society of Chemistry, 2007), 304.

42. HORSETAIL, BOTTLEBRUSH, SCOURING-RUSH, SHAVE GRASS

EQUISETUM ARVENSE

Equisetaceae family

CAUTION: *This plant is banned in Canada. Do not take if you suffer from severe edema. This can also interfere with absorption of vitamin B if taken over a long period of time. Do not use while pregnant. Do not use for extended periods of time.*

ORIGINS: Horsetail is native to just about everywhere temperate around the globe except Australia, New Zealand, and Antarctica. These ancient plants once formed a dominant fernlike plant family that grew up to 100 feet tall in prehistory. It is an herbaceous, perennial, spore-producing ancient relative of ferns that produces two types of stems: reproductive and does not photosynthesize, and those that photosynthesize and are nonreproductive. Horsetail has become an invasive species in New Zealand, owing to its rhizomatous and quick-spreading underground systems.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: The stems of horsetails are arranged with whorls of small, needlelike leaves that circle the stem. They jut out from the earth like a spear. The stems are usually green and hollow, with joints and ridges. They still very much resemble ancient plants, for they have not changed much evolutionarily.

PART USED: aerial parts

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: astringent, diuretic, anti-inflammatory, cooling, vulnerary

TASTE: dry, slightly sweet

SUBSTITUTIONS: stinging nettle

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Older horsetail plants make fine external poultices or decoctions for washes, but the young shoots are best for tinctures and tea making. The plant can be cultivated easily in moist soils but spreads rapidly and is therefore considered a weed in some regions. Do not forage these plants from roadsides, as they can accumulate nitrates and other toxins.

TRADITIONAL USES: This plant has been incredibly useful and special for many Indigenous North American peoples. Horsetail has been largely used to scour and shine wooden objects like arrow shafts and other tools. It was also used by the English to scour ceramic, cast-iron, and metal cookware, hence its English name, bottle brush or scouring-rush. The young tender shoots were an important and special food for many nations. The Hesquiat Nation has a seasonal feast of these tender shoots meant to be enjoyed with family and friends in the spring.[1] The stems were also given to teething children to chew on. Potawatomi folks used the infusion of the stems for kidney problems like bladder infections and urinary tract infections,[2] a medicinal use many other peoples shared. It was also used by the Nlaka'pamux or Nlakapamuk, previously known as Thompson River Salish, as a tea to help expel afterbirth.[3] The tea was also used by many nations as an anti-rheumatic, to soothe the ever-present human condition of arthritic pain.

John Gerard (1545–1612), an influential English herbalist, noted in his *Herball* that the tea is good for ruptures of the bladder and other bowels. In English folk medicine, horsetail roots boiled in wine were also used for ulcers of the stomach and kidneys, as well as for coughing and breathing difficulties.[4] In Russian folk medicine, horsetail was used for heart conditions due to dropsy (too much water in the system) and for purifying the blood, especially to support the liver and in instances of lead poisoning.[5]

MODERN USES: Horsetail is a mover of fluids through the kidneys and bladder, as well as a wound-healing herb. It contains a large amount of silica and oxide of silicon, also commonly found as quartz.[6] A decoction made from the stems can be useful in heavy menstruation, for urinary tract infections, and as a wash for skin eruptions and acne. The astringency of the decoction and infusion is also useful for inflamed gums as mouthwash and gargle for sore throats, as well as inflamed mouth tissue. It is included in remedies for broken bones and speeding healing, especially when mixed with plantain and nettle or other nutritive herbs.

The silica is water soluble, meaning the tincture is not the most helpful for broken bones, however; some herbalists recommend small doses of horsetail (10 drops or less of tincture) along with other bone-healing support herbs to aid healing. (This speaks to the strange and wondrous nature of herbal medicine; sometimes we cannot name exactly why something works!)

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

HORSETAIL TEA

1 tablespoon dried young horsetail
1 cup freshly boiled water

Place the horsetail in a clean glass jar. Pour in the hot water and steep for 15 to 30 minutes covered. Strain and drink 2 to 3 cups of this tea a day for kidney issues without blood in the urine.

Note: You can use this tea as a strengthening hair rinse simply by rinsing your hair with it after washing. You can also add the tea to your bath as a soak for relieving muscle tension and soreness.

HORSETAIL MINERAL VINEGAR

3 cups chopped soft horsetail stems
About 4 cups organic apple cider vinegar

Place the horsetail in a glass jar and add the vinegar, filling it to the top and pressing the material down. Make sure all the plant material is submerged. Add a square of wax paper to the top and then close the jar. Allow to steep for 2 to 4 weeks in a cool, dark place.

Pour the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer or cheesecloth bag into a large measuring cup, squeezing to extract all the liquid. the jar and pour the liquid back into it. Close the lid and then store in a cool, dark place for up to 8 months.

Use in 1 to 2 teaspoon amounts in salad dressings or in warm water as a mineral pick-me-up.

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1 Nancy J. Turner and Barbara S. Efrat, *Ethnobotany of the Hesquiat Indians of Vancouver Island* (British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1982), 28.

2 Huron H. Smith, "Ethnobotany of the Forest Potawatomi Indians," *Bulletin of the Public Museum of the City of Milwaukee* 7 (1933): 1–230.

3 Nancy J. Turner et al., *Thompson Ethnobotany: Knowledge and Usage of Plants by the Thompson Indians of British Columbia* (Royal British Columbia Museum, 1990), 86.

4 J. K. Crellin et al., *A Reference Guide to Medicinal Plants: Herbal Medicine Past and Present* (Duke University Press, 1990), 254.

5 Alma R. Hutchens, *Indian Herbalogy of North America* (Shambhala, 1991), 158.

6 R. K. Iler, *The Chemistry of Silica* (John Wiley, 1979).

43. HYSSOP

HYSSOPUS OFFICINALIS

Lamiaceae family

CAUTION: *This is an emmenagogue and abortifacient, so do not use in pregnancy. The essential oil is quite toxic.*

ORIGINS: Hyssop is originally from western Asia and southern Europe, and it has naturalized in some parts of New England. It is known for being one of the many magical ingredients in the beloved green liquor Chartreuse and the North African and Middle Eastern spice blend za'atar.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Hyssop is a shrubby, woody perennial that has square stems and opposite, lanceolate leaves. It has tubular, two-lipped dark bluish-purple flowers. In garden catalogs, it sometimes comes in white and pink varieties.

PART USED: budding aerial parts

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: antiviral, astringent, carminative, vulnerary, cholagogue, stimulating, diaphoretic

TASTE: bitter, aromatic, pungent, warming, dry

SUBSTITUTIONS: motherwort, horehound

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This common garden herb is most often harvested when in flower in summertime. Where it grows wild, it is a mint family plant, and like many others in this genus, you can pinch off the uppermost growth and it will continue to grow new tops.

TRADITIONAL USES: Hyssop has a long history as a sacred herb used for spiritually cleansing spaces. It is debated as to whether it is the plant mentioned in the Bible, but it was used in ancient Egypt by priests to cleanse themselves by ingesting it.[1] Hyssop was considered a medicine throughout the Middle East, and was even used as an antidote to lead poisoning.[2] In medieval Germany, it was soaked in wine and used to cleanse the liver and relieve melancholy.

It has been used as a tea, applied topically, for external pain from rheumatism in American folk medicine, as well as drunk for the same purposes. Cherokee peoples adopted its medicinal properties and used it for lung issues like asthma and coughs and to bring on the menses.[3]

MODERN USES: Hyssop is excellent for infections of the respiratory system and stomach infections. It is one of the main plants herbalists use to treat low-grade fevers. Hyssop as a tea or tincture is useful for influenza and other viral conditions, especially ones that linger. It has historically been used for asthma, and there is strong evidence that as a tincture or tea it is useful to treat chronic asthma today.

It's recommended to drink at the first tickle of a cold or sign of flu. It is also helpful in tincture blends for herpes virus to ease outbreaks (add self heal and lemon balm for this purpose). Hyssop also has gentle nervine action; ingest as a warm tea to ease the discomfort that comes with a nervous stomach. The tea can also be used as a soak for bruised or injured skin; try soaking in a bath with a muslin cloth bag full of the herb.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

HYSSOP RESPIRATORY TEA

1 tablespoon chopped dried elderflowers
1 teaspoon chopped dried peppermint leaves
1 teaspoon chopped dried thyme leaves
1 tablespoon chopped dried hyssop leaves and flowers
About 4 cups freshly boiled water
Honey (optional)

Place the elderflowers, peppermint, thyme, and hyssop in a 1-quart glass jar. Add the hot water and steep for 30 to 60 minutes.

Strain the tea. Taste and sweeten with honey, if desired. Store lidded in a glass jar in the fridge 2 to 3 days.

Drink the tea by the cupful throughout the day, reheating as desired.

HYSSOP TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh herb

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take about 30 drops one to four times a day.

HYSSOP COUGH SYRUP

¼ cup finely chopped hyssop flowers and leaves
4 cups water
1 tablespoon dried mullein flowers or horehound (optional)
1 to 2 cups honey
Brandy (optional)

Place the hyssop in a medium saucepan and add the water. Set over medium-low heat and simmer until the liquid is reduced by half. Turn off the heat and, if desired, add the mullein flowers or horehound, cover, and steep for 30 minutes.

Pour the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer into a medium bowl. Measure the liquid; for every 2 cups liquid, add 1 cup honey and pour back into the saucepan over low heat, mixing well while gently reheating the tea to dissolve the honey. Pour into a 1-quart glass jar. If desired, add a splash of brandy to help it last longer (for those who consume alcohol). Screw on the lid and store in the fridge for up to 1 month.

Mix 1 teaspoon of this syrup into a cup of hot water up to three times a day for a cough, cold, flu, or long fever.

Note: Old recipes for hyssop syrup frequently call for dates or figs to be added to the herb mixtures to sweeten and thicken it. Yum!

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1 Thomas Taylor, trans., *Porphyry: On Abstinence from Animal Food*, book 4 (Terrullian, 1823), 110–38, https://www.terrullian.org/fathers/porphyry.htm.

2 B. Saad et al., "Safety of Traditional Arab Herbal Medicine," *Evidence-Based Complementary & Alternative Medicine* 3, no. 4 (2006): 433–39, https://www.doi:10.1093/ecam/nel058.

3 Paul B. Hamel and Mary U. Chiltoskey, *Cherokee Plants and Their Uses: A 400 Year History* (Herald Publishing, 1975), 40.

44. IRONWEED

VERNONIA SPP.

Asteraceae family

CAUTION: *Aster family plants can be allergens for some people, so use with caution.*

ORIGINS: This purple-flowering plant is native to eastern North America, from New Jersey to south to Alabama. The plant derives its name from its hard stems.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Ironweed is a tall grassland plant with a long, lance-shaped leaf that grows on tall, straight stalks, much like goldenrod. It is crowned with bunches of many small, dark purple flowers. Ironweed is often seen in late summer, a herald of the fall to come, waving in the fields alongside goldenrod and joe-pye weed, a trifecta of dark purple, golden yellow, and pale pink.

PART USED: roots, leaves, flowers

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: digestive, warming, stimulating, diuretic, alterative

TASTE: bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: joe-pye weed

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: In the United States, this is a native plant that many important pollinating insects adore. It readily grows in meadows and gardens, and it is safe to harvest small amounts for personal use. Be careful not to overharvest so as to ensure the pollinators can enjoy the abundant blooms. Many other plants can be used instead of this plant, like joe-pye weed. When harvesting the roots, leave the tops of the plants on to ensure correct identification, especially when digging around many other plant species to ensure they do not get mixed up.

TRADITIONAL USES: In Black folk medicine, the root decoction of *Vernonia augustifolia* was used historically as a treatment for snakebite and as an aphrodisiac.[1] The tea from the root was also used in historically Black

communities in North America to treat a weak bladder.[2] In Indigenous Natchez medicine, the whole plant was decocted for dysentery.[3] In traditional Cherokee medicine, this plant's roots were used as a menses regulator, for loose teeth, and to help with the pain after childbirth.[4]

The leaves have been used as a tea for colds and flus, as well as for a gargle to treat sore throats. The root was used for a tea to soothe feverish conditions. This plant's relative *V. fasciculata* was also a ceremonially sacred plant among the Yuchi people, who originated in the Southeast but were forcibly removed to Oklahoma.[5] In early American folk medicine, the root was considered a bitter tonic for fevers. It was also used as a blood purifier and uterine tonic.[6]

MODERN USES: Plants in this family have all been used for medicine and can be used interchangeably. This wonderful plant has fallen out of use in modern folk herbalism, but the root tea is a wonderful tonic for indigestion, colds, and flus. The tea is also helpful as a bitter tonic for digestion; combine it with red clover flowers, sassafras root, spicebush twig, and chickweed for a spring tonic to enliven the digestion and encourage elimination after a long sedentary winter. For colds, add mint leaves, yarrow, and elderflower to ironweed root tea to encourage sweating.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

IRONWEED ROOT DECOCTION

2 tablespoons chopped dried ironweed roots
4 cups water

Place the ironweed in a medium saucepan and add the water. Put over medium-low heat and simmer until reduced by half. Pour through a fine-mesh strainer into a glass jar, cover with the lid and store in the fridge for up to 3 days.

Take 2 to 4 tablespoons a day added to another tastier tea or alone.

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1 Faith Mitchell, *Hoodoo Medicine: Gullah Herbal Remedies* (Summerhouse Press, 1998), 66.

2 Herbert C. Covey, *African American Slave Medicine* (Ripg/Galleys, 2007), 78.

3 Linda Averill Taylor, *Plants Used as Curatives by Certain Southeastern Tribes* (Botanical Museum of Harvard University, 1940), 64.

4 Paul B. Hamel and Mary U. Chiltoskey, *Cherokee Plants and Their Uses: A 400 Year History* (Herald Publishing, 1975), 41.

5 Laura C. Martin, *A Naturalist's Book of Wildflowers: Celebrating 85 Native Plants in North America* (Countryman Press, 2021).

6 J. K. Crellin et al., *Herbal Medicine Past and Present* (Duke University Press, 1990), 266–67.

45. JEWELWEED, TOUCH ME NOT

IMPATIENS CAPENSIS

Balsaminaceae family

CAUTION: *It is not recommended to consume or use internally. This is for external use only.*

ORIGINS: Jewelweed is native to the United States and can be found from the East Coast to the Pacific Northwest.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Jewelweed is a succulent, juicy green plant with hollow stems tinged with hot pink. The flowers are orange or yellow, and appear like little mouths. The leaves are simple and have large, rounded teeth. They are alternately arranged, meaning they zigzag down the stalk. When the plant is submerged in water, the water is repelled from the leaf, causing it to look shimmery and silver, hence its name.

PART USED: leaves, stems, flowers

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: astringent, antipruritic, cooling, anti-inflammatory, antihistamine, emollient

TASTE: neutral

SUBSTITUTIONS: curly dock leaf

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This plant is often found in abundance. Still, use mindfulness when harvesting—a little goes a long way, and if you harvest the stems with sharp shears, the whole plant will not need to be destroyed.

TRADITIONAL USES: This native North American plant was historically used by the Cherokee and many other Indigenous peoples as a remedy or as a preventative for poison ivy, a use it is well known for today. It also had ceremonial uses and was used as a wash for women about to give birth.[1] The Iroquois used this plant as a cold infusion for fevers, as well as for kidney issues and edema.[2]

MODERN USES: Jewelweed is best known as a remedy for poison ivy, but there is a lot of folklore about how and when to use it. One of the most effective means to receive its itch-soothing magic is to use the fresh or frozen uncooked plant material. The stems are crushed and the juice is applied directly to poison ivy rashes. The juice can also be used on psoriasis, eczema, or bug bites.

Note that application of jewelweed does not really help *prevent* poison ivy rash; it is best for soothing existing skin conditions. It is also excellent for insect bites and small cuts and scrapes.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

JEWELWEED ICE LOTION

Jewelweed is often cooked down into salves and ointments as a remedy for poison ivy and other itchy rashes. However, the best way to experience the soothing nature of this plant is to blend it raw with a little water to make it into a liquid and pour it into ice cube trays to freeze it. The jewelweed ice cubes can then be popped out, stored in a freezer bag, and used to rub onto itchy rashes, chafe, and other painful skin irritations.

1 cup finely chopped jewelweed stems and leaves (and flowers, if seasonal)
1 ½ cups water

Place the jewelweed in a blender and add the water. Process until smooth, then pour into an ice cube tray and place in the freezer. Freeze overnight, then pop out the cubes and store in a freezer bag for future use.

1 Paul B. Hamel and Mary U. Chiltoskey. *Cherokee Plants and Their Uses: A 400 Year History* (Herald Publishing, 1975), 41.

2 James William Herrick, *Iroquois Medical Botany* (PhD thesis, State University of New York, Albany, 1977), 380.

46. JOE-PYE WEED, GRAVEL ROOT, QUEEN OF THE MEADOW

EUTROCHIUM PURPUREUM

Asteraceae family

CAUTION: *This plant contains pyrrolizidine alkaloids and should not be used in large doses over time. Not to be used in pregnancy or when breastfeeding.*

ORIGINS: Joe-pye weed is native to the eastern and central parts of the United States. According to eighteenth-century legend, an Indigenous man named Joe Pye used the root to heal typhus in New England. Yet, upon further inspection, it has also been surmised that no such man existed, and the word *joe-pye* is an Anglicization of an Indigenous word *jobi* from an unknown location that was used to describe this plant. Either way, the plant was used for typhus and surely was introduced to the settlers by Indigenous people.[1]

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: This plant grows on tall, thin, hollow green stalks. The stalks can grow from 2 to 7 feet high. Pointed lance-shaped leaves appear in whorls around the stalk and the flowers atop the plant are pink to mauve and appear in late summer.

PART USED: aerials parts, root

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: febrifuge, diuretic, laxative, tonic, anti-rheumatic, immune stimulant, diaphoretic

TASTE: bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: boneset, goldenrod

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This native plant often grows in large communities in the wild, but please grow it yourself when possible. The flowers are important to butterfly species and other pollinator populations.

TRADITIONAL USES: *Eutrochium purpureum* is often called gravel root, and as such has been used extensively in Cherokee, Ojibwa, Potawatomi, Iroquois, and many other Indigenous cultures in eastern North America, often for kidney and bladder issues, particularly kidney stones. The Cherokee have used the long

hollow stems as a traditional straw to apply medicine onto people needing healing.[2] It was and still is used extensively in women's medicine as a remedy for troubles with miscarriage, for burns as a wash, as a laxative, and even as an antidote to poisons and arrow wounds in the Navajo tradition.[3]

MODERN USES: The roots of joe-pye weed are used to aid in the passage of kidney stones and curb the frequent urination associated with prostate issues, as well as other chronic urinary conditions. It is also used for menstrual pain and helps bring on the menses. A warm infusion of the root is useful for arthritis pains and rheumatic conditions and joint pain.

A tincture made from the root is great to address the excess phlegm that comes with upper respiratory illnesses, especially along with antiviral herbs like honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp.) and the powerful sinus-infection-fighter ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*). A warm decoction of the root is helpful as a diaphoretic, much like boneset for fevers, and helps to bring on a sweat.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

JOE-PYE COUGH SYRUP

1 cup chopped fresh joe-pye weed flowers and leaves
4 cups water
About 2 cups raw honey

Place the flowers and leaves in a medium saucepan and add the water. Place over very low heat, cover, and simmer for 2 hours.

Pour the liquid through a fine-mesh strainer and place back into the saucepan. Put back over low heat and simmer gently until the liquid is reduced by half. While the decoction cools, measure the liquid and add the same amount of honey. Stir well, and using a funnel, pour into a glass jar, seal with a lid, and store in the fridge for up to 1 month. Take 1 teaspoon for coughs up to four times per day.

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1 Patricia Kyristi Howell, *Medicinal Plants of the Southern Appalachians* (Boston Academic Publishing, 2006), 103.

2 Paul B. Hamel and Mary U. Chiltoskey, *Cherokee Plants and Their Uses: A 400 Year History* (Herald Publishing, 1975), 42.

3 Francis H. Elmore, *Ethnobotany of the Navajo* (School of American Research, 1944), 85.

47. JUNIPER, EASTERN RED CEDAR

JUNIPERUS VIRGINIANA, J. COMMUNIS

Cupressaceae family

CAUTION: *Do not use in pregnancy. There is some lore indicating that juniper berries irritate the kidneys, but according to new research, there is little evidence this is true.*[1] *As with all herbs, use in moderation.*

ORIGINS: Juniper (*J. virginiana*) grows abundantly in North America, from Canada on down to Florida and west to Texas. There are about 60 species of juniper. The plant also grows in the Arctic, in Africa, throughout parts of western, central, and southern Asia (specifically in Tibet), and in the mountains of Central America. Incredibly, juniper can bloom and release pollen several times in one year.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: This slow-growing shrub can grow into a "tree" of widely varying height depending on the species. It has evergreen, needle-like leaflets as a youngster and as some species age, they develop scales much like other cedar trees. The cones, which are referred to as berries, are waxy and bluish and can be a variety of shapes and sizes, from round to having a slight point at the base. A great way to identify juniper is to feel the needles. If they are quite prickly, it is most likely juniper.

PART USED: the berries, which technically are cones, and branches

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: stimulating, warming, circulatory, carminative

TASTE: pungent, bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: other pine species

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: In the fall, the berries ripen and can be harvested. Please harvest mindfully, especially if the tree is not abundant in your area.

TRADITIONAL USES: Chinese juniper (*J. chinensis*; 圆柏, 桧) has had a wide variety of medicinal applications in Chinese folk medicine and traditional Chinese medicine. It has been used primarily for dysentery, urinary tract

infections, leukorrhea, tuberculosis, and rheumatic pain.[2] The berries have been used in traditional Turkish medicine as a diuretic, antiseptic, and for treating gastrointestinal problems.[3] In Romania, the berries would be brewed into an infusion or tinctured for their diuretic and antiseptic properties and applied externally for skin conditions.[4]

All juniper species, especially *J. communis* and *J. virginiana*, have been extensively used by Indigenous North Americans as medicines for worms, respiratory illnesses, and as spiritually significant weavings, incenses, and much more.

Interestingly, juniper berries are a component of the liquor known as gin.

MODERN USES: Juniper is a reliable remedy for urinary tract infections and other urinary issues. It is a circulatory stimulant and helps remove any heat in the body resulting from old injuries, both internal and external. You can apply juniper oil to painful arthritic joints and add a decoction made from the branches to your bath to treat soreness or for a nice herbal foot soak.

Juniper is a fine addition to edema or fluid-retention remedies and can be used for chronic joint pain as well. It is a historical blood cleanser because it is powerfully antiseptic, able to clear bad infections. Juniper is drying and astringent as well, which is great for swollen, infected, and boggy tissues. But juniper can be helpful when added a demulcent herb like marshmallow, calendula, or plantain if body tissues are getting too dry during their use.[5] It also makes a great wash or sitz bath for leukorrhea.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

JUNIPER TEA

1 teaspoon crushed dried juniper berries
1 cup freshly boiled water

Place the juniper berries in a glass jar. Pour the hot water over the berries and let them steep for 30 minutes. Strain out the berries and pour the tea into a clean glass jar. Cover with the lid, let cool, and store any excess tea in the fridge 2 to 3 days.

Take 1 to 3 cups per day for urinary tract infections.

JUNIPER OIL

This oil is excellent for sore muscles and joints, as well as for poor circulation in the fingers and toes.

¼ cup juniper berries, crushed
1 ¼ cups olive oil

Place the juniper berries in the top pot of a double boiler and add the oil. Put some water in the bottom pot of the double boiler. Place the double boiler over low heat and warm the oil for 3 to 4 hours. Check the water level in the bottom pot and add more, if needed. Make sure to not overheat the oil and cook the berries; the oil should never boil.

The oil should now be fragrant with juniper scent! Pour the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer into a glass jar. Close with the lid and store in a cool, dark place like a kitchen cupboard or pantry for up to 1 year.

Apply the juniper oil to any sore joints and muscles whenever you're in need as a massage oil. You can also use this in salves.

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1 CoreyPine Shane, *Southeast Medicinal Plants* (Timber Press, 2021), 146.

2 Takeatsu Kimura, *Northeast Asia* (World Scientific, 1996), 16.

3 T. Baytop, *Therapy with Medicinal Plants in Turkey (Past and Present)* (Nobel Tıp Kitapevleri, 1999), 152–53.

4 O. Bojor, *Ghidul plantelor medicinale şi aromatice de la a la Z* (Guide to Medicinal and Aromatic Plants from A to Z) (Fiat Lux, 2003).

5 CoreyPine Shane, *Southeast Medicinal Plants* (Timber Press, 2021), 146.

48. KUDZU

PUERARIA LOBATA

Fabaceae family

CAUTION: *There is some evidence and historic precedent for kudzu to affect fertility. Avoid in pregnancy.*

ORIGINS: Kudzu is one of the most infamous invasive plants of the southeastern United States. The word *kudzu* comes from the Japanese *kuzu*, meaning "vine." Kudzu was introduced in the United States during the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, kudzu was promoted for erosion control. This led to hundreds of young men being put to work planting kudzu through the Civilian Conservation Corps. As we have seen, the widespread planting of kudzu had unintended consequences. It has now naturalized or become invasive in the United States, South America, Australia, South Africa,[1] and Europe.

PART USED: root

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: cooling, nutritive, moistening, nourishing, antispasmodic, metabolic

TASTE: sweet, acrid

SUBSTITUTIONS: ashwagandha, tulsi

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Wild-harvesting is a great method for chemical-free invasive plant control. In areas where kudzu is invasive, harvest freely! In China, kudzu is traditionally harvested during autumn or winter. The flowers smell amazing and make a lovely jelly that tastes almost like grape juice. Just be aware to only harvest from places that are not sprayed with pesticides. Kudzu loves to grow on roadsides, which are often heavily sprayed.

TRADITIONAL USES: Kudzu root has been a traditional medicine in China and is known there as *ge-gen*. It has been used for 200 years to treat fever, acute dysentery, diarrhea, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases.[2] Kudzu has also been used as a stress reliever and to treat neck stiffness. A decoction made from the

roots has been used to treat alcoholism and a general craving for alcohol. In Ayurveda, vidari kand (*P. tuberosa*) is used as an aphrodisiac and as a diuretic, and is mixed with honey for heavy menstrual bleeding, among many other uses. This plant has been useful for all three *doshas*, or the energetic types of Ayurveda.[3]

MODERN USES: Kudzu contains compounds that help regulate blood sugar, and it is well known for its helpfulness with blood pressure issues. Kudzu root is also useful for those with addictions to alcohol and can ease the cravings as well as hangovers. From the Chinese medicine perspective, kudzu can aid with viral infections when shoulder or upper back tension is present along with the sickness.

Kudzu helps relieve sinus headaches and acts as a gentle antispasmodic for back pain and tension.[4] It also contains compounds that aid in preventing the bone loss associated with osteoporosis.[5]

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

KUDZU ROOT TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh root
1:5, 55%: dried root

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 40 to 60 drops three times a day for osteoporosis.

Caution: *Do not use the tincture if struggling with alcohol addiction.*

KUDZU ROOT POWDER

Kudzu powder can be made at home but requires a powerful herb powderer. You can buy it readily from health food stores on herbal supply companies. Take 1 to 2 g per day; this means if you encapsulate 500 mg of powdered root, take 2 to 4 pills a day total.

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1 IUCN, 2005. Global Invasive Species Database: *"Pueraria montana var lobata,"* Global Invasive Species Database, IUCN, accessed August 20, 2010, https://www.iucngisd.org/gisd/speciesname/Pueraria+montana+var.+lobata.

2 K. H. Wong et al., "Kudzu Root: Traditional Uses and Potential Medicinal Benefits in Diabetes and Cardiovascular Diseases," *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 134, no. 3 (2011):

584–607.

3 Ram Bharti et al., "*Pueraria tuberosa*: A Review of Traditional Uses, Pharmacology, and Phytochemistry," *Frontiers in Pharmacology* 11 (January 2021), https://doi.org/10.3389/fphar.2020.582506.

4 CoreyPine Shane, *Southeast Medicinal Plants* (Timber Press, 2021), 148.

5 Jill Stansbury, *Herbal Formularies for Health Professionals,* vol. 5: *Immunology, Orthopedics, and Otolaryngology, Including Allergies, the Immune System, the Musculoskeletal System, and the Eyes, Ears, Nose, Mouth, and Throat* (Chelsea Green, 2021).

49. LAVENDER

LAVANDULA ANGUSTIFOLIA

Lamiaceae family

CAUTION: *Try a test spot on the inner wrist before using all over the body, in case of allergy.*

ORIGINS: This well-loved plant is native to France, India, and the Mediterranean. Recognized around the world as a soothing and gentle herb, lavender is one of the best loved remedies for sleep and relaxation. Do not ingest the essential oil.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: There are a few species of lavender and each looks different, but *Lavandula angustifolia* has upright stems with thin, smooth, fragrant leaves. Thin flower stalks emerge from its bushy grow and are topped with small, fragrant, deep purple flowers.

PART USED: flowering tops, leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: cooling, antiseptic, carminative, stimulating, soothing, antibacterial

TASTE: pungent, warming

SUBSTITUTIONS: mint, tulsi, chamomile

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Lavender is relatively easy to grow in gardens in most temperate climates without harsh winters. It can be wild-harvested in some areas of the Mediterranean; harvest the flowers sparingly to avoid damaging the

group by not allowing some seed to fall to ground. Be mindful to local populations.

TRADITIONAL USES: In ancient Persia, Greece, and Rome, many species of lavender were used to disinfect hospitals and sick rooms. Knowledge of its healing abilities spread to India and Tibet, and in the seventeenth-century Persian medical text *Makhzan-El-Adwiya*, lavender is referred to as the "broom of the brain" because it is reputed to sweep away impurities.[1]

The *Gyu-zhi* (Four Tantras) by Chandranandana is the earliest Indian medical text to be translated into Tibetan (eighth century BCE) in which lavender is mentioned as part of psychiatric formulas. These formulas are found in edible ointment or medicinal butter form, and are still used today in Tibetan Buddhist medicine for treating insanity and psychosis.[2]

In Arabic medicine, lavender has been used for kidney issues and nausea. It has also been used in traditional Chinese medicine to treat infertility, infections, anxiety, and fever. Lavender has a long history of use as a tea in Europe to treat irritability and mild depression.

MODERN USES: Lavender is a great, safe antibacterial herb that provides a scent soothing to the nervous system. Lavender tea is a lovely way to reduce excitability and nervous system overstimulation. The tincture is also an easy way to create anti-itch and antiseptic wound washes when diluted in warm water and dabbed on insect bites, stings, and rashes. A few drops of the oil mixed with witch hazel makes a soothing sunburn spritz for tender hot skin.

For irritability and mild depression or low spirits, place a muslin bag of lavender flowers into a hot bath and bathe in the tea water when you're feeling overwhelmed and burnt out. The diluted tincture also makes an excellent mouthwash for chronic bad breath or halitosis. The flowers can be infused in oil and used as a rub on sore muscles. Mixing with other rubefacient herbs like cayenne helps stimulate new blood flow to injuries, along with proper massage or acupressure; just be sure not to touch any mucous membranes and wash your hands after application!

Lavender can help treat nervous asthma and spasmodic coughing. It helps bring blood to the surface of the skin, so folks who tend toward cold fingers and toes find it a valuable addition to a bath. The tea is carminative and helpful for colic and stomach pains from gas and bloating. It is safe for children in small doses.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

LAVENDER TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh flowering tops
1:5, 75%: dried

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take ½ teaspoon diluted in warm water before bed, in sips, to help with insomnia.

LAVENDER LINIMENT

A liniment is not meant to be ingested. Generally, liniments are made by soaking herbs in either rubbing alcohol or witch hazel. This is meant only to be rubbed onto the skin, avoiding mucous membranes.

2 cups dried lavender flowers
1 cup witch hazel toner (available at most drugstores)

Place the lavender flowers in a 1-pint glass jar and cover with the witch hazel. Close with the lid and let infuse for 2 weeks. Strain out the flowers and then store in the jar in a cool, dark place indefinitely.

Rub onto sore muscles and joints or spray onto the face, but not the eyes, for skin redness, irritation, or sunburns.

LAVENDER SALT

1 cup dried lavender flowers
2 cups Epsom salts

Place the lavender flowers and Epsom salts in a medium bowl and stir well. Pour into a clean, dry glass jar, cover with the lid, and allow to infuse for 3 to 4 weeks. Store in a cool, dark place indefinitely.

Add ½ cup of the salt to hot bath water and soak sore muscles or calm frazzled nerves. It's also soothing when applied to itchy, irritated skin and is useful to counteract the skin-damaging effects of chafing.

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1 Zeinab Nasiri Lari et al., "Efficacy of Inhaled *Lavandula angustifolia Mill* Essential Oil on Sleep Quality, Quality of Life and Metabolic Control in Patients with Diabetes Mellitus Type II

and Insomnia," *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 251 (April 2020): 112560.

2 M. Blumenthal et al., eds., *Herbal Medicine: Expanded Commission E Monographs* (American Botanical Council and Integrative Medicine Communications, 2000).

50. LEMON

CITRUS LIMON

Rutaceae family

CAUTION: *Generally considered safe, though high in acid. Do not ingest the essential oil.*

ORIGINS: Lemons are one of the most well-loved and widely spread fruits in the world. The lemon originated in northern India, where it was an important part of food and medicine tradition. The trees reached Europe by way of Persia or Media and were grown first in Greece and then in Italy in the second century.[1]

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Lemon trees are small evergreen trees or bushes with glossy, dark green leaves. The leaves are oval shaped and when young, some lemon species have thorns at their leaf bases. Lemons are football-shaped fruits that start out green and ripen to a bright yellow.

PART USED: fruits, leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: antiseptic, antilithic, febrifuge, nutritive, refrigerant, cooling

TASTE: sour, bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: orange or other citrus

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Wild lemons are those that have escaped cultivation and are common in some warmer climates, but just as with any fruit, be mindful of whether they have been sprayed with pesticides.

TRADITIONAL USES: Lemons are an important part of Indian folk medicine and Ayurvedic tradition. Lemons were included in recipes for a huge variety of ailments, including insanity and low iron.[2] Because the fruits are so widespread and available they became a part of many folk traditions. Lemons have been used in some Mexican folk medicine traditions as a hot lemonade for colds and flus.[3] Lemon juice was also imbibed upon waking in Russian folk medicine practices as a daily tonic for health.[4]

MODERN USES: Lemons are high in vitamin C and other amazing compounds. Lemons are helpful for colds and flus and generally aid in assisting the removal of calcium deposits like gall and kidney stones.[5] Lemon peel and fruit are both helpful for circulatory issues like arteriosclerosis varicose veins and bruises. Bleeding gums and mouth infections—namely gingivitis—are also aided by swishing the tincture of lemon peel in your mouth after gentle brushing. Lemon juice in warm water makes a great remedy for sore throats. Lemon juice is helpful for many with gout. One word of caution is to rinse the mouth with clear water after eating or drinking citrus, as the acids can damage the enamel of the teeth over time.

Lemon juice is also useful topically for issues of the skin.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

LEMON PEEL TINCTURE

1:3, 95%: fresh peel

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take no more than 1 teaspoon one to three times a day.

LEMON AND HONEY COUGH SYRUP

This is useful also in salad dressings and marinades.

1 whole organic lemon
About 4 cups honey

Chop the lemon, peel and all, into small cubes. Fill a 1-quart glass jar with the lemon and top it with the honey. Close the lid and store in a fridge or in a cool root cellar, allowing the lemon to flavor the honey for 2 weeks. The juices and honey will make the peel mushy, but the resulting liquid is delicious. This syrup keeps well in the fridge due to the acidity of the lemon and the preservative powers of honey.

Take by the spoonful or in warm water for coughs.

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1 Madame Grieve, *A Modern Herbal* (Stone Basin Books, 1931/1992), 474.

2 T. G. Ramamurthi Iyer, *The Hand Book of Indian Medicine: The Gems of Siddha System* (Sri Satguru, 1981).

3 Robbie Fields, *Food, Spices Double as Folk Cures*, vol, 9 (Borderlands, 1991).

4 Pavel Matveevich Kurennov, *Russian Folk Medicine* (W. H. Allen, 1970), 18.

5 Thomas Easley and Steven Horne, *The Modern Herbal Dispensatory: A Medicine-Making Guide* (North Atlantic Books, 2016), 259.

51. LEMON BALM

MELISSA OFFICINALIS

Lamiaceae family

CAUTION: *Avoid if you have thyroid issues.*

ORIGINS: The genus name *Melissa* hails from the Greek word for "bee." This mint family plant originated in the Middle East, specifically in Iran, central Asia, and North Africa. It naturalized throughout Europe by the 1500s and is now an integrated part of medicine traditions around the world.

PART USED: aerial parts

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: relaxant, nervine, antispasmodic, antiviral, carminative, warming

TASTE: sweet, aromatic

SUBSTITUTIONS: tulsi

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: As a nonnative plant, lemon balm is tenacious and occasionally can be found as an escapee from gardens. It is best to grow it in a pot or harvest it heavily to prevent overgrowth and spreading. Harvest freely. If it is being harvested from an area with native growth, cut just above the nodes as you would with other mint family plants, and it will increase in size and bushiness. The plant thrives when harvested.

TRADITIONAL USES: Lemon balm's many medicinal uses are heavily celebrated in Iranian folk medicine, one of the places that this lovely plant hails

from. It was used traditionally as a digestive, carminative, antispasmodic, sedative, analgesic, tonic, and diuretic, as well as for gastrointestinal disorders of many types.[1] It has been used as a nervine for thousands of years and has been recommended for mood disorders. It really shines, however, in Middle Eastern and central Asian herbal history.

In the ninth century, works by Shapur ibn Sahl, Ali ibn Sahl Rabban al-Tabari, and Thābit ibn Qurra discussed lemon balm as a remedy for anxiety, heart palpitations, fear, melancholia, obsessiveness, and panic. In the tenth century, Persian physician Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi emphasized lemon balm as an antidepressant and mood enhancer. Ali ibn al-Abbas al-Majusi, a Persian physician, used it as a memory enhancer and remedy for anxiety, amnesia, and headaches. Al-Razi also recommended lemon balm for neurological conditions like epilepsy and amnesia. This plant and its medicinal uses made their way into Europe sometime between the seventh and tenth centuries, when the Moors brought the plant to Spain.[2]

Western Europe quickly took a liking to this fragrant plant. The Swiss physician and alchemist Paracelsus (1493–1541) believed that lemon balm was an "elixir of life." It was believed to both strengthen the life force and promote longevity. A Carmelite water was made by Carmelite nuns in the seventeenth century to treat neuralgia and nervous headaches; it consisted of lemon peel, lemon balm, nutmeg, coriander, angelica root, and other herbs.[3]

MODERN USES: Lemon balm is a delicious and beloved garden herb. It is a calming nervine and tonic used to treat mild anxiety. It can aid in calming anxiety-induced heart palpitations and digestive upsets resulting from worry. The irritability that comes from anxiety is also soothed by this sweet and beautiful plant. Its taste is deeply pleasant for those who love the flavor of lemon as a tasty tea. With its antiviral effects, it is great for colds and flus, and for those who have herpes simplex viruses, including HSV1, HSV2, shingles, and chickenpox. Taking lemon balm can help shorten the healing time of herpes sores and prevent many outbreaks. It does not, however, prevent the spread of this common but highly contagious condition.

Lemon balm also has a profound effect on the mind. It is useful for attention, learning, and other mental acuity issues. It can be a gentle help along with conventional treatments for ADHD, Alzheimer's, and other memory and cognitive issues.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

LEMON BALM DIGESTIVE TEA

You can add other carminative herbs, like star anise or dill seed, to this lovely tea to further help in relieving gas and settling an upset stomach.

1 teaspoon dried chamomile flowers
1 teaspoon dried lemon balm leaves
½ teaspoon dried catnip leaves
½ teaspoon dried fennel seed
3 cups freshly boiled water
Honey (optional)

Place the herbs in a glass jar and add the hot water. Let steep for 30 minutes. Strain and sweeten with honey, if desired. Enjoy. Drink 1 cup as often as desired.

LEMON BALM TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh leaves
1:5, 60%: dried herb

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take ½ to 1 teaspoon three times a day. Avoid if you have thyroid issues.

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1 S. Miraj and Kiani S. Rafieian-Kopaei, "*Melissa officinalis* L: A Review Study with an Antioxidant Prospective," *Journal of Evidence Based Complementary Alternative Medicine* 22, no. 3 (2017): 385–94.

2 Sarah Corbett, "Jovial Lemon Balm for Pisces Season: Rowan + Sage," Rowan + Sage Accessible Herb School & Apothecary website, April 26, 2023, www.rowanandsage.com/blog/lemon-balm.

3 "Lemon Balm," Maine Organic Farmer & Gardener website, 1996.

52. LINDEN, LIME, BASSWOOD

TILIA AMERICANA, T. CORDATA

Malvaceae family

CAUTION: *Generally safe for children, those who are pregnant, and the elderly. Avoid the bark if you are on blood thinners.*

ORIGINS: Lindens originated in the northern temperate climates of North America, Europe, and Asia, where they display the most diversity. There are roughly 30 species in the *Tilia* genus. The name *linden* comes from the Old English *lind,* meaning "flexible." In England, the linden tree is referred to as a lime tree, though there is no connection to the citrus.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: These temperate, broad-leaved deciduous trees are often quite tall, festooned with many small, fragrant white and yellow flowers and heart-shaped leaves. They can often live for hundreds of years.

PART USED: flowers, stipules, leaves, bark

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: cooling, nervine, digestive, moistening, anodyne, hypotensive, diaphoretic, antispasmodic

TASTE: sweet

SUBSTITUTIONS: rose

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Linden flowers can sometimes be found in abundance, especially in cities where the trees are planted ornamentally, but always endeavor to harvest sparingly when taking from the wild. The leaves and bark can be gathered from windfall branches. If not using the bark for medicine, soak the logs or large branches in water for about a month; then peel the bark for fiber or bast, which is where the American name *basswood* comes from.

TRADITIONAL USES: In Western European folk medicine, tea made from linden blossoms was used to treat headaches and nervousness. In France, linden tea was called *tilleul* and was used as a sedative drink. Taking a hot bath in the flowers was a remedy for insomnia and nervous irritability; if you have ever smelled their sweet scent, it is quite lovely. The distilled water of linden was also

used for epilepsy. Even sitting beneath the tree was seen as helpful for the condition.

In Japan, there are three endemic species, *Tilia japonica, T. maximowicziana*, and *T. kiusiana*, which are all considered sacred and are planted near shrines and temples, as well as used for making wood carvings. The flowers are used for colds and flu in Japanese folk medicine, as well as in cosmetics and as a nervine.[1] *T. americana* var. mexicana has been used in Mexican folk medicine as a remedy for sleeplessness, nervousness, and headaches.[2]

In Indigenous North American herbal practices, the bark and twigs were often used. Cherokee folks traditionally made a decoction of bark and twigs for dysentery, bowel issues, and heartburn.[3]

MODERN USES: Linden is often used for its nervine actions, yet it is a wonderful addition to formulas used to treat fevers, colds, and influenza. When mixed with chamomile and elderflowers, as well as yarrow and peppermint, it contributes to a hot tea blend for these common ailments. As a relaxant and nervine, linden flower and leaf tea helps those who struggle to relax and unwind. It is also used as a remedy for muscle tension, insomnia, emotional dysregulation, mild anxiety, and depression.[4] Mix the tea with digestives like fennel, dill seed, peppermint, or ginger for any stomach upset resulting from anxiety.

Linden tea is useful for treating mild menstrual cramps and the headaches that come from nervousness and tension in the shoulders and neck. The tea is also great for overexcited children who are struggling to calm down; mix the tea with catnip and allow it to cool to lukewarm to help calm hyperactive little ones. Linden also supports the cardiovascular system and is an aid in balancing both high and low blood pressure. It is cooling in nature, helpful to relieve tension and stress-related heart palpitations, especially alongside hawthorn berry and flower.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

LINDEN TEA

The tea is generally safe for pregnancy, children, and the elderly.[5]

¼ cup dried linden leaves and flowers
About 4 cups freshly boiled water

Place the linden in a 1-quart glass jar and add the hot water. Cover and let steep for 4 hours, or preferably overnight.

Strain the tea and store in a glass jar with a lid once cooled in the fridge for 2 to 3 days.

Take by the cupful as often as desired.

LINDEN INFUSED WINE

If having alcohol works for you, drink a small glass of this wine to calm the nerves and soothe an anxious mind.

1 cup fragrant dried linden flowers and leaves
1 750 ml bottle sweet white wine

Place the linden into a half gallon glass jar and add the wine. Lid the jar and let steep in a cool, dark place for 2 weeks. Rinse the wine bottle to have ready for bottling later.

Pour the wine through a fine-mesh strainer and use a funnel to pour it into the wine bottle. Cork the bottle and store in a cool, dark place for one month, or in the refrigerator almost indefinitely. Always check the top of the line for mold before ingesting.

Drink the wine by the cup to soothe nerves and for pleasure.

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1 Daniel Janowski, "Anthropological Significance of Tilia Trees in Japan," *Ecology and Evolution* 13, no. 7 (2023): e10303.

2 Jill Stansbury, *Herbal Formularies for Health Professionals,* vol. 4: *Neurology, Psychiatry, and Pain Management, Including Cognitive and Neurologic Conditions and Emotional Conditions* (Chelsea Green, 2020), 87.

3 Paul B. Hamel and Mary U. Chiltoskey, *Cherokee Plants and Their Uses: A 400 Year History* (Herald Publishing, 1975), 24.

4 Peter Holmes, *The Energetics of Western Herbs: A Materia Medica Integrating Western and Chinese Herbal Therapeutics,* vol. 1 (Snow Lotus Press, 2007).

5 B. Terzioglu Bebitoglu, "Frequently Used Herbal Teas During Pregnancy: Short Update," *Medeniyet Medical Journal* 35, no. 1 (2020): 55–61, https://doi:10.5222/MMJ.2020.69851.

53. MAGNOLIA, SOUTHERN MAGNOLIA, BULL BAY

MAGNOLIA GRANDIFLORA

Magnoliaceae family

CAUTION: *Avoid long-term use. Not for use during pregnancy.*

ORIGINS: The tree is endemic to the evergreen lowland subtropical forests of the Gulf of Mexico and southern Atlantic coastal plain of North America.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: This tree has smooth gray bark and large and profuse shiny dark green leaves with silvery, fuzzy undersides. The leaves have no teeth and are waxy to the touch. The flowers are beautifully fragrant, of an almost lemony-vanilla scent, and are white and large, with 6 to 15 petal-like structures known as *tepals*.

PART USED: leaves, flower buds, inner bark

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: anti-inflammatory, analgesic, stimulating, laxative, diaphoretic, bitter, tonic, nervine

TASTE: bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: spicebush

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Magnolia trees are often planted ornamentally, so take care to not harvest ones that have been sprayed with pesticides. Use wind-fallen branches or harvest only small branches.

TRADITIONAL USES: Different species of magnolia are grown around the world, and in traditional Chinese medicine, the flowers, bark, and leaves have been used to reduce inflammation of arthritis, as well as used for respiratory congestion, asthma, and anxiety. In North America, the Choctaw historically used the inner bark as a decoction for prickly heat rashes. In Southern folk medicine, the hot tea of magnolia was used for fevers while the cold tea was used for digestion.

MODERN USES: A tincture of the unopened flower buds or flowers is a nice remedy for upper respiratory infections, as well as serving as a digestive bitter.

The tincture is also a good anti-inflammatory to add to other herbal blends.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

Magnolia Fresh Flower Bud Tincture

1:2, 95%: flower buds

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 20 to 30 drops two or three times a day for respiratory illnesses, as a digestive bitter, or with other nervine herbs.

54. MARSHMALLOW

ALTHEA OFFICINALIS

Malvaceae family

CAUTION: *Marshmallow is generally considered a safe and gentle herb with little toxicity, however taking large doses of a mucilaginous herb at the same time as certain medications is not advised, as it can decrease the amount of that medication that the body can absorb.*

ORIGINS: Marshmallow is native to Europe, western Asia, and North Africa. The name *althea* comes from a derivation of the Greek word meaning "to heal." The sweet confection known as marshmallows were once made from the extract of the roots of this plant.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Marshmallow plants are upright growing with very soft and velvety triangular to oval leaves alternating up their stalks. The leaves have three to five shallow lobes and are irregularly toothed. The flowers are light purple to pinkish white, and have five petals.

PART USED: root, leaves, flowers

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: demulcent, diuretic, emollient, nervine, relaxant, antispasmodic, nutritive, vulnerary, tonic, mucilaginous, moistening

TASTE: sweet

SUBSTITUTIONS: common mallow

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Marshmallow is generally not wild-harvested in the Americas, but it can be grown easily in gardens. Please harvest mindfully in its native ranges.

TRADITIONAL USES: Marshmallow has a long history of use and reverence in Egypt and beyond. Traditionally, its roots were boiled down and mixed with honey and egg white to create something similar to today's marsh-mallows and served as a confection and medicine. In ancient Egypt, this soothing and moistening remedy was used as a poultice to heal wounds; it was also used to soothe coughs.

In Chinese folk medicine, marshmallow was called *yao shu kui* and is used to "cool the blood."[1] Poultices of the root and leaves have been used on hard-to-heal wounds, infected sores, and other nasty skin conditions throughout Western Europe.[2] The teas of the root and leaves have also been used to soothe sore throats, dry coughs, and colds in the regions where this beautiful plant grows.

MODERN USES: Marshmallow is a soother and a moistener. The mucilage in the root and leaves makes it a great remedy for irritated, dry coughs. The cold infusion is excellent at the first signs of a urinary tract infection; combining both the leaf and root tea is a great way to remedy this common ailment.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

COLD MARSHMALLOW ROOT TEA

Because of the mucilage content (the gooey carbohydrates in the root), this is best made as a *cold* tea. Hot water is not the best solvent for its delicate medicinal constituents.

1 tablespoon shredded dried marshmallow root
About 2 cups cold water

Place the marshmallow root in a glass jar and add the cold water. Cover and leave overnight to steep.

Strain out the root bits, store in a clean glass jar with a lid in the fridge. It will keep for up 3 days.

Drink this tea freely for coughs or as a restorative when you are recovering from a long illness or when you have a sore throat or cough.

Note: You can make a larger batch of this tea to consistently treat a sore throat or urinary tract infection.

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1 X. Su et al., "Synergism of Chinese Herbal Medicine," *Evidence Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine* 2016 (2016): 7279361, https://doi:10.1155/2016/7279361.

2 Madame Grieve, *A Modern Herbal* (Stone Basin Books, 1931/1992), 507.

55. MILK THISTLE, HOLY THISTLE

SILYBUM MARIANUM

Asteraceae family

CAUTION: *None known, but over consumption can cause nausea or diarrhea.*

ORIGINS: The *Silybum* genus has two species that grow in the Mediterranean, southern Russia and Anatolia, and eastern Africa's mountainous regions.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Milk thistle has spiny dark green leaves with distinctive white marbling that grow in circular rosettes. The name *milk thistle* is inspired by those white veins on the leaves. The flowers are magenta pink and thin-petaled. The bracts are small, leaflike structures often positioned beneath a flower or inflorescence that make the thistles appear even more spiny!

PART USED: seeds

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: moistening, cooling, galactagogue, hepatoprotective, alterative, warming

TASTE: bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: burdock

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Milk thistle is easily grown in the garden and is considered a noxious weed in places like Washington and California, where it is illegal to buy or sell, so please check before growing. It is toxic to livestock so be aware of this if you work with animals.

TRADITIONAL USES: Milk thistle has been used for medicine dating back to the ancient Egyptians.[1] The name *milk thistle* is inspired by folkloric belief that the Virgin Mary's breast milk spilled upon the white-veined leaves, leading to its use as an herb for lactating mothers. It was also traditionally eaten as a food for this purpose, the leaves stripped of their prickles and boiled into a dish of greens. It was also used to cure sudden stitches in the sides or cramps![2] In Irish folk medicine, it was used for whooping cough by drinking the decoction made from the seeds.[3] It was also commonly used to treat liver disorders in many Arabic-

speaking countries and in Islamic herbal medicine. In Ukraine and Poland, it has been a medicine for the liver. It also has a long history of use in Greece, Spain, and Italy for digestive and liver complaints.[4]

Milk thistle was used in Germany for jaundice and other bile issues and as a decoction externally for certain cancers. It was also used by ancient Anglo-Saxons to treat hydrophobia (an early name for rabies).[5]

MODERN USES: The compound silymarin that is found in milk thistle can protect the liver from damage by the carbon tetrachloride and amanita (death cap) in mushrooms.[6] It is also kidney protective and useful for folks with diabetes and those who suffer from alcoholism. Milk thistle is also true to its name as a great galactagogue, meaning it aids in milk production during lactation. The ground seed is a great way to utilize the medicine of this special plant; because of its high oil content, it is best stored in the fridge to prevent spoilage.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

MILK THISTLE TINCTURE

1:3, 70%: dried seeds

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take ½ to 1 ½ teaspoons up to four times a day.[7]

MILK THISTLE SEED DECOCTION

1 teaspoon dried milk thistle seeds
2 cups water

Crush the milk thistle seeds in a mortar and pestle, or quickly blend them in a coffee grinder. Place the powder in a medium saucepan and add the water. Place over low heat and gently simmer for 15 to 20 minutes. Pour through a fine-mesh strainer and transfer to a glass jar. Cover with the lid and store up to 2 to 3 days in the fridge.

Take 1 cup of the decoction one to four times a day.

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1 Catherine Whitlock, *Botanicum Medicinale: A Modern Herbal of Medicinal Plants* (MIT Press, 2020).

2 Robin Page, *Cures and Remedies: The Country Way* (Davis-Poynter, 1978).

3 Beatrice Maloney, “Traditional Herbal Cures in County Caravan, Part 1,” *Ulster Folklife* 18 (1972): 66–79.

4 Bashar Saad and Omar Said, *Greco-Arab and Islamic Herbal Medicine: Traditional System, Ethics, Safety, Efficacy, and Regulatory Issues* (John Wiley, 2011), 186.

5 Madame Grieve, *A Modern Herbal* (Stone Basin Books, 1931/1992), 797.

6 Thomas Easley and Steven Thomas, *The Modern Herbal Dispensatory: A Medicine-Making Guide* (North Atlantic Books, 2016), 267.

7 Easley and Thomas, *Modern Herbal Dispensatory*, 267.

56. MIMOSA TREE, SILK TREE

ALBIZIA JULIBRISSIN

Fabaceae family

CAUTION: *Mimosa tree flowers are not an ideal medicine for those who experience mania or have manic depression or bipolar disorder. Not to be used during pregnancy or lactation.*

ORIGINS: This beautiful tree is native to China, Korea, Azerbaijan, and Iran. It is considered invasive in the southern United States and Hawaii.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Mimosa trees have a delightful appearance with their pink cotton candy–like flowers dotting their 10- to 50-foot trunks. Their leaves resemble those of a fern and are bipinnate. Mimosa trees often have multiple trunks and a spread-out, wide crown.

PART USED: flowers, inner bark, leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: anxiolytic, cooling, moistening, relaxant, nervine, vulnerary

TASTE: sweet flower; acrid or astringent bark

SUBSTITUTIONS: tulsi, peach leaf, passionflower

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This is an invasive tree in North America, so harvest freely; where it is native, harvest only the flowers and small branches to protect the local population. In its native ranges, simply pull the flowers or snip small branches with pruning shears.

TRADITIONAL USES: In China, mimosa is known as the "tree of happiness," and it has been used in traditional Chinese medicine to help stabilize moods. Its use was first documented in the *Shen Nong Ben Cao* (Divine Husbandman's Classic of the Materia Medica) during the second century for its mood-supportive and calming properties, as well as its health benefits as a tonic.[1] As a tonic, it was used externally to treat bruises and fractures.[2]

MODERN USES: Mimosa is a wonderful nervine, and it is thought to enhance neurotransmitter regulation. It is, of course, not a substitute for psychiatric medications, but it has a powerful ability to help stabilize one's mood, especially in times of grief and loss. It is helpful with situational mild depression and anxiety, especially when used alongside other modalities, like therapy, lifestyle changes, and rest. It is also good medicine for insomnia during times of anxiety. Mimosa can be combined with other herbs like California poppy and skullcap for treating moderate depression and anxiety.

Mimosa is helpful for folks who experience repetitive thoughts and can't seem to focus. However, mimosa is not recommended for those who are prone to mania, especially in bipolar disorder. While it cannot replace medications that help with OCD or ADHD, mimosa can be supportive of other therapies.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

MIMOSA FLOWER ELIXIR

About 4 cups fresh mimosa flowers
2 cups raw honey
2 cups brandy (80 proof)

Place the mimosa flowers in a 1-quart glass jar and pack them down gently. Cover with the honey and brandy. Cover the jar with the lid and allow to sit in a cool, dark place for 4 weeks to infuse.

Pour the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer into a medium bowl. Rinse the jar and then pour the elixir back into it, close with the lid, and set in a cool, dark place; it will keep for up to a year or more.

Take ½ teaspoon three times a day to help elevate your mood.

MIMOSA BARK DECOCTION

I use Thomas Easley's recipe here.[3] It is recommended for its grounding, nervine action, or use it as a soak for bruised skin or non-puncture wounds.

1 to 2 teaspoons shredded dried mimosa bark
1 ¼ cups water

Place the bark in a small saucepan and add the water. Put the saucepan over low heat and simmer for 30 minutes covered.

Pour the decoction through a fine-mesh strainer into a cup.

Take ¼ cup of the decoction at a time, two to three times a day.

1 John Chen and Tina Chen, *Chinese Medical Herbology & Pharmacology* (Art of Medicine Press, 2004), 768–69.

2 D. Bensky et al., *Chinese Herbal Medicine* (Eastland Press, 2015).

3 Thomas Easley and Steven H. Horne, *The Modern Herbal Dispensatory: A Medicine-Making Guide* (North Atlantic Books, 2016).

57. MONARDA, BEEBALM, WILD BERGAMOT, HORSE MINT, WILD OREGANO

MONARDA SPP.

Lamiaceae family

CAUTION: *Do not use during pregnancy. Many pungent herbs can aggravate heartburn, so use with caution.*

ORIGINS: There are about 20 species in the *Monarda* genus. They all originated in eastern North America and Canada but can now be found all over the continent except in California and Florida. They are easy to grow in gardens and they attract many gorgeous pollinators, with their incredibly beautiful red, white, purple, and pink flowers.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Monarda resembles other mint plants, with its square stems and opposite leaves. The leaves are pointed, toothed, and gently fuzzy, with the plants sometimes growing quite tall, as in the case of *M. didyma*, which can grow to 4 feet tall. The monarda flowers are striking, almost like a firework explosion or the top of a fancy chicken's feathered head! The petals are tubular and come in whitish, purple, maroon, bright red, and hot pink shades, and yellow, depending on the species.

PART USED: flowers, leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: emmenagogue, relaxant, nervine, diaphoretic, warming, stimulating, antifungal, antibacterial, antiviral

TASTE: spicy, sweet, aromatic

SUBSTITUTIONS: oregano

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Monarda is a native plant in North America and often grows abundantly, especially along waterways. It is also easy to grow in a pot or garden. When wildcrafting, harvest the flowers and leaves sparingly—keep in mind the plant's reliance on photosynthesis to survive. Pinching off the topmost leaves will encourage the plant to grow bushier.

TRADITIONAL USES: Monarda has been part of Indigenous medicine in the United States. People of the Cherokee Nation, for example, have used monarda

tea as a sedative to aid in sleep and for digestive issues like gas and bloating. They have also used monarda's medicine for infections, like colds, flu, and fevers.[1] The Blackfeet people have used this medicine for coughs and colds, as well as for kidney infections, sore eyes, and as a poultice for cuts.[2] The Winnebago people have used the leaf decoction to treat eruptions and pimples on the face.[3]

MODERN USES: Monarda, like many fragrant mint family plants, is rich in thymol, a potent compound with antimicrobial activity. The monarda flower and leaf tincture is indispensable for hot, persistent infections. The tincture is also helpful in frequent, consistently taken doses and combines well with other antimicrobial herbs like Oregon grape to fight infections of the mucous membranes. The tincture can also be used internally to treat yeast infections alongside other therapies. Make a strong tea and use it as a warm sitz bath when treating a yeast infection. The hot tea is wonderful for colds, especially for influenza when fever is present. This tea can also be used as a hot steam to clear the sinuses. The tea is also a lovely remedy, though strong tasting, for headaches. Additionally, you can use monarda tea as a soak for wounds.

Monarda tincture is helpful with infections of the gums and mouth when used as a mouthwash, and it is also great for urinary tract infections, especially when mixed with juniper berry and Oregon grape root tincture. Use the infused vinegar diluted with water in a nice glass spray bottle for sunburns.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

MONARDA FLOWER OXYMEL

This oxymel is one of the most beautiful—using colorful monarda varieties will turn your medicine a lovely shade of reddish to hot pink!

About 4 cups fresh monarda flowers
2 cups organic apple cider vinegar (or other vinegar with at least 5% acidity)
2 cups raw honey

Place the monarda flowers into a 1-quart glass jar, squeezing them gently in your hands to release the plant chemicals as you fit them into the jar. Pour in the vinegar and honey, then stir well with a wooden spoon, ensuring all the plant matter is submerged. Cover with a BPA-free plastic lid or a metal lid with a piece of wax paper to protect it and place the jar in a cool, dark spot to steep for 2 weeks, stirring a couple of times a week.

Stir well and then pour the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer into a large measuring cup. Rinse the jar and then pour the mixture back into the jar. Cover and store in a cool, dark place for up to 6 months or in the fridge for up to 1 year.

Mix 1 to 2 tablespoons of oxymel into hot water for colds and flu, or drink as a refreshing beverage combined with seltzer and lemon, or mix into a hot tea of peppermint, yarrow, and elecampane for a bad cough, fever, or cold.

MONARDA STEAM

Inhaling the steam produced by a hot herbal tea allows one to absorb volatile oils and clear the sinuses.

¼ cup dried monarda flowers
2 cups freshly boiled water

Place the monarda in a large bowl, then add the hot water. Place your head over the bowl and drape a clean towel over your head and shoulders to direct the steam up and into your nose. Carefully inhale the steam, then blow your nose into tissues to remove the mucus as it is loosened, and repeat, gently breathing in the steam from the bowl.

Caution: Steam burns are serious. Be sure to test the heat level of the steam before lowering your face toward the bowl and breathing in.

MONARDA TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh leaves and flowers
1:5, 60%: dried herbs

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 1 to 2 dropperfuls of tincture three times a day.

MONARDA TEA

2 teaspoons dried monarda flowers
1 cup freshly boiled water

Place the monarda in a tea strainer set on a cup or mug. Pour in the hot water and let steep 10 minutes. Lift out the strainer and enjoy.

Drink 3 to 6 cups a day for acute fevers, flus, and colds.

MONARDA-INFUSED VINEGAR

This vinegar has an excellent oregano taste and makes a great marinade as well.

3 cups chopped or crushed fresh monarda flowers, or try 2 ½ cups of dried if fresh are unavailable
About 4 cups organic apple cider vinegar

Place the flowers in a 1-quart glass jar. Press down on the flowers to fit them into the jar. Add the vinegar and stir, making sure all the plant material is submerged. Place a piece of

wax paper on the lid to protect it from eroding from the acid of the vinegar. Then close the jar with the lid. Place in a cool, dark spot and let steep for 2 to 4 weeks.

Pour the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer into a large measuring cup, squeezing the plant material to extract all the liquid. Rinse the jar, then pour the liquid back into the jar and close with the lid. Put in a cool, dark place to keep for up to 6 months if it's a fresh-herb vinegar and 8 months if it's dried herbs.

Take 1 to 2 teaspoons in 1 cup of warm water for colds and flus. You can also add this vinegar to salad dressings and marinades for its oregano-like taste.

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1 Daniel E. Moerman, *Native American Ethnobotany* (Timber Press, 1998).

2 John C. Hellson, *Ethnobotany of the Blackfoot Indians* (National Museums of Canada. Mercury Series, 1974), 84.

3 Melvin R. Gilmore, *Uses of Plants by the Indians of the Missouri River Region* (SI-BAE Annual Report #33, 1919), 111.

58. MUGWORT

ARTEMISIA VULGARIS

Asteraceae family

CAUTION: *Avoid during pregnancy, while breastfeeding, and if trying to conceive.*

ORIGINS: Mugwort is native to temperate Asia, Europe, North Africa, and Alaska but is now widespread as both an invasive and a naturalized plant worldwide.[1]

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Mugwort is fast growing and spreads rapidly. It has green, silvery, and sometimes purple-hued stems that have many dark green deeply lobed leaves with serrated edges that are covered with fine, downlike hairs on the underside. It features small yellow to reddish-hued oval flowerets touched with the same downlike feeling as the leaves. Mugwort is often associated with the moon because of its silver down texture on the undersides of its leaves.

PART USED: aerial parts

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: drying, vulnerary, antimicrobial, antiparasitic, digestive, emmenagogue, nervine

TASTE: bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: wormwood

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Mugwort is often invasive or abundant wherever it grows, so harvest freely, but be careful to ensure it is uncontaminated if found near old house sites or on roadsides. Harvest the young leaves in the spring to dry for flavorings and tea. In the fall, harvest the flowering tall plants for tincturing and drying to use as burn bundles, as they are the most fragrant.

TRADITIONAL USES: In tenth-century England, mugwort was called the "mater herbarum," or the "mother of all herbs,"[2] and with good reason. Mugwort was used in beer brewing from the early Iron Age (500 BCE), according to remains found at Eberdingen-Hochdorf in what is now Germany. According

to the Anglo-Saxons, someone who carried this herb would not be harmed by venomous beasts, especially the toads, as well as by sorcery or poisons.

Mugwort was used to treat travelers' fatigue and weariness. Romans often planted mugwort along roadsides so travelers could place its leaves in their sandals to avoid weariness. They also used it mixed with fat to rub onto weary feet. Further, when mugwort was infused in wine, it was thought to act as a preventive for excessive opium doses. Interestingly, mugwort was featured in a tenth-century English magical incantation and recipe for an ointment that was used to treat infection and poisoning.

In the East, mugwort was important in Japan, Korea, and Chinese folk medicine. One of the most well-known uses of mugwort was and still is in moxibustion, or moxa, as part of traditional Chinese medicine. Moxa are burning sticks of the silver fluff of mugwort which are placed on afflicted parts of the body along the meridian lines to treat painful arthritic joints among other things. This ancient practice is thought to have originated during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644 BCE) and is practiced extensively to this day.[3]

MODERN USES: Mugwort is warming and bitter; the bitter flavor of an herb often indicates it is helpful with digestion. This is perhaps the reason mugwort is a traditional flavoring for roast goose, a fatty meat made more digestible with mugwort's aid. The tea, drunk warm, is lovely after a heavy meal of any kind. Many digestives are also nervines, and mugwort is helpful for those with tension and depression.[4] Mugwort also stimulates the uterus, and so the tea and tincture are helpful in bringing on delayed menses. Mugwort-infused oil is helpful for a stiff neck and shoulders and effective when used during an abdominal massage to alleviate cramping. The oil can also be made into a salve, as it has good antibacterial action.

Mugwort tea is helpful for poison ivy and as an infused vinegar for itchy skin. The tea makes a great addition to sitz baths for itchy vaginal skin or a yeast infection. Mugwort is antifungal and antiviral, and so helps treat herpes simplex viruses, rotavirus, and influenza by blocking their cellular binding actons.[5]

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

MUGWORT VINEGAR ITCH SPRAY

3 cups chopped fresh mugwort leaves
4 cups organic apple cider vinegar

Place the mugwort in a glass jar and cover with vinegar. Place a square of wax paper over the top and then close the lid. Set aside in a cool, dark place to infuse for at least 2 weeks.

Strain, jar, and lid the vinegar, storing in a cool, dark place.

When ready to use, pour 2 tablespoons of the vinegar through a !funnel into a small spray bottle. Dilute it with water so that it is ⅛ of the total spray bottle. Store it in the fridge and use this cold spray when needed on poison ivy, bug bites, or hives.

Caution: *Avoid spraying in your eyes, as it will sting!*

MUGWORT TEA

Caution: *Do not ingest this tea while pregnant. It can stimulate vivid dreams, which can be a wonderful experience to some or overstimulating to others.*

2 teaspoons dried mugwort
1 cup freshly boiled water

Place the mugwort in a glass jar. Pour on the hot water and let steep, covered, for 30 minutes. Strain out the leaves and enjoy.

Take 1 cup of the tea three times a day for acute symptoms for no longer than two weeks.

Note: To make this tea for a sitz bath, use 2 cups chopped fresh mugwort and 2 cups hot water. Steep for 20 minutes, then pour into a basin for a sitz bath.

MUGWORT TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh flowering tops and leaves

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 10 to 40 drops three times a day.

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1 Colin W. Wright, *Artemisia* (CRC Press, 2001), 61.

2 H. Ekiert et al., "Significance of *Artemisia Vulgaris* L. (Common Mugwort) in the History of Medicine and Its Possible Contemporary Applications Substantiated by Phytochemical and Pharmacological Studies," *Molecules* 25, no. 19 (2020): 4415.

3 N. C. Dawes and J. K. Anastasi, "The Case for Moxibustion for Painful Syndromes: History, Principles and Rationale," *Current Research in Complementary & Alternative Medicine* 6, no. 1 (2022): 153.

4 David Hoffmann, *The Herbal Handbook: A User's Guide to Medical Herbalism* (Healing Arts Press, 1998).

5 P. Liu et al., “Ethanol Extract from *Artemisia argyi* Leaves Inhibits HSV-1 Infection by Destroying the Viral Envelope,” *Virology Journal* 20, no. 1 (2023), .10.1186/s12965-023-o1969-5.

59. MULLEIN, CANDLEWICK

VERBASCUM THAPSUS

Scrophulariaceae family

CAUTION: *The fine hairs can be irritating to the throat if not filtered out.*

ORIGINS: Mullein is native to Europe, North Africa, and Asia. It has naturalized throughout the world, including North America, Hawaii, Chile, and from western China to the Himalayas.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Mullein has soft, broad, toothless fuzzy leaves. The long, hairy leaves grow in the form of a basal rosette. During the second year of growth, a tall stalk shoots up with alternating leaves that appear to continue down the stem. It is crowned with many beautiful yellow flowers, each having five petals, in late summer.

PART USED: leaves, flowers

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: soothing, moistening, cooling

TASTE: neutral, bitter, mild

SUBSTITUTIONS: agrimony

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Mullein is a rough-and-tumble plant that grows in waste places like roadsides and recently tilled earth. It is often considered a weed outside its native habitat and where naturalized grows abundantly. Just be sure to not gather this plant from roadsides and other polluted places, as the plant can absorb toxins.

TRADITIONAL USES: Mullein was once used extensively to treat tuberculosis in the North Atlantic Islands and in Ireland. Nicholas Culpepper, an eighteenth-century influential English herbalist, noted that it was decocted in wine during the seventeenth century to treat convulsions, cramps, hernia, and old coughs.[1] The flowers infused in oil were applied to piles, and the leaf poultices in vinegar were used on old ulcers and infected wounds.

In Appalachian folk medicine, mullein has been one of the most popular plants in herbal medicine. Mullein was once chewed, smoked, and made into tea for all manner of lung ailments. A combination of salt and mullein tea was used to bathe swollen body parts, while the leaves were bound around limbs to reduce swelling from injuries.

MODERN USES: Mullein is one of the most abundant and common herbs used for lung problems. The leaves are helpful in a tea for asthma, bronchitis, phlegmy coughs, and colds. Mullein can even be helpful with serious issues like pneumonia, when used along with Western medicine. Mullein root is a great decoction for urinary tract infections and it mixes well with juniper for this common ailment.

Mullein can also be used for back and spinal pain, as the wonderful Michigan herbalist Jim McDonald advises. He recommends tincturing the leaves and stalk for lower back pain and structural issues, as well as using the root to help tonify and strengthen the pelvic floor, especially after pelvic surgery. The flowers make an excellent oil for earaches, especially when combined with garlic oil, which is antimicrobial. You can use this on infected piercings, after you remove a splinter, or on other minor infections of the skin.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

MULLEIN TEA

About 3 cups chopped fresh or dried mullein leaves
4 cups freshly boiled water

Place the mullein in a 1-quart glass jar, about one-fourth of the way with fresh leaves or one-fifth of the way with dried. Pour in the boiling water to the top. Cover and steep for 4 hours.

Line a large bowl with a piece of cheesecloth or muslin, then pour the jar contents into it, squeezing out any goodness left in the mullein. Lift the cheesecloth and squeeze to extract any remaining liquid. Rinse the jar. Pour the tea through a fine-mesh strainer to catch any remaining solids. Then pour the tea back into the jar. Cover and store 2 to 3 days in the fridge.

Drink the tea throughout the day, warming it up as needed for coughs and colds if desired.

Caution: *Always use a fine-mesh strainer or cheesecloth to catch the little hairs on the mullein leaves, as they can be irritating.*

MULLEIN LEAF TINCTURE

Mullein is notoriously difficult to tincture with dried leaves because they are so lightweight. Michigan herbalist Jim McDonald's recipe is recommended here.[2] However, alternatively you can use dried leaves with a 1:7 ratio using 75% alcohol.

10 ounces chopped fresh mullein leaves
20 fluid ounces (1 ¼ cups) high-proof alcohol

Place the mullein in a 1-quart glass jar. Pour in the alcohol and use a fork to push down the mullein and get the air bubbles out. Allow to steep 4 weeks, then strain out the leaves and store in a cool, dark place.

MULLEIN ROOT TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh root when possible

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 30 to 60 drops one to three times a day in warm water or a tea of your choice as a bladder tonic, especially for incontinence, spastic bladder issues, and other urinary issues where the tissues are weakened. If desired, mix the tincture with a tea of goldenrod tops for bladder issues.

Note: If alcohol can't be tolerated, decoct 4 tablespoons of the shredded root in 1 quart of boiling water for 30 minutes, then strain and drink the remaining liquid throughout the day.

MULLEIN FLOWER OIL

Gather the flowers and lay them on a dish towel. Allow them to wilt overnight in a place out of direct sunlight. This helps remove the moisture so the oil will not spoil.

1 cup fresh mullein flowers, wilted overnight
1 cup olive oil
2 to 3 drops high-proof alcohol (optional)

Place the flowers in the top of a double boiler and pour the oil over them. Put water in the bottom of the double boiler, then place the unit on low heat. Gently heat the oil mixture for 3 to 4 hours. Be sure not to simmer or boil the flowers.

Pour the oil mixture through a fine-mesh strainer into a small bowl. Then pour the oil into a glass jar. If desired, add a few drops of the alcohol to the oil to help prevent spoilage. Cover and place in a cool, dark spot to store for 6 to 8 months.

Warm and use 1 to 3 drops of the oil to drip into the ear for an earache, onto infected ear piercings, or other skin infections. This is especially helpful when mixed with St. John's wort or plantain oil.

Caution: *Never put anything into the ear if eardrum perforation is suspected!*

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1 Nicholas Culpeper, *Culpeper's English Physician and Complete Herbal* (H. Richardson, 1801). 124.

2 Jim McDonald, "Mullein." Herbcraft website, n.d., www.herbcraft.org/mullein.html.

60. OATS, MILKY OATS

AVENA SPP.

Poaceae family

CAUTION: *Some commercially produced oats are processed on the same equipment as wheat, making this grain occasionally not gluten free. Oats can also affect the effectiveness of morphine.*[1]

ORIGINS: Native to Turkey and Europe, the oat grass family of plants is a widespread important food crop. *Avena sterilis*, the wild ancestor of the oat, originated in the Fertile Crescent of the Middle East and it was spread into temperate regions.[2] The oats were not cultivated until later in the history of grain domestication and were perhaps at first a weed species that grew among the earlier cultivated wheat and barley. The oldest known cultivated oats were found in caves in Switzerland, believed to date back to the Bronze Age, or about 1500 BCE. China is home to a wild oat species and has cultivated those oats for about 2,000 years. China is also the birthplace of the hull-less naked oat, *A. nuda*.[3]

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Oats grow like grass (which they are) and are topped with small teardrop-shaped seeds; they have long, thin leaves like other grasses.

PART USED: immature flower heads, stems, leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: cooling, sweet, nutritive, nervine, tonic, moistening, restorative

TASTE: sweet

SUBSTITUTIONS: passionflower, rose

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Oats are most often cultivated as a garden and farm crop, meaning you will not often find it in the wild. To harvest, simply grab the base of the stem gently and "unzip" the oat seeds as you slide your hand up the stalk. They make a satisfying popping sound as they are pulled free from the plant. They can then be dried or tinctured immediately.

TRADITIONAL USES: It is a classic image in early stories to see a patient being gently spoon-fed a healing gruel. This dish would have been made of oats in those days. Scotland, for example, has a long history of using oats as food and medicine, since the plant thrives in Scotland's cool, wet climate. Warm oatmeal was used as a poultice on boils and infections, as well as on sore eyes. The oat straw tea was boiled and used for neuralgia.[4] In many European folk traditions, oats were used for weakness in the nerves and as a tea for those who were suffering from nervous exhaustion.

Milky oats are used in some traditional Indian medicinal practices to address opium and tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*) addiction and to ease the symptoms of withdrawal.[5] In traditional Persian medicine, oats were used to soothe inflamed or itchy skin and were added to baths and compresses. In northwest Pakistan, *A. sativa* was among the top twelve most commonly identified plants used in medicinal practice; it's where oats were fried in ghee and milk to make a paste that was used as an aphrodisiac and a general body tonic.[6]

MODERN USES: Oats and oat tops are medicine for those who have been pushed beyond their limits. There are many nervines for those in acute panic and anxiety, but oats are the tonic nervine that most need. Gentle, abundant, easy to grow, they are there to soothe the nervous and restless mind. They calm the frazzled nerves when our system is out of whack, like when we're overtired and overworked. The milky oat tincture and oat straw or oat top tea can help rebuild a depleted system. The tea is a great nerve tonic, meaning that over time, drinking it throughout the day can aid in restoring a feeling of nervous system well-being.

Oats contain magnesium, B vitamins, calcium, potassium, and manganese alongside many other nutrients and is a staple food around the world. Their power not only lies in their medicinal uses as tea and tincture but their consumption as a nourishing food. They have been touted in cereals as a heart-healthy grain. When eaten in their pure form, they are effective at supporting the health of the cardiovascular system and thus the brain.[7] Oats can also be used powdered in baths to help a wide variety of skin issues and inflammations.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

MILKY OAT TOPS TINCTURE

1:2, 80%: fresh oat tops exuding milk

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. It works best to use a blender with the fresh oats to macerate the tincture.

Take ½ to 2 dropperfuls as needed for chronic nervous exhaustion and dysregulation.

OAT STRAW TEA BATH

4 cups oat straw
4 cups water

Place the oat straw in a large saucepan and add the water. Cover and gently simmer for 30 minutes.

Pour the mixture through a strainer, then add to bath water while it's hot. Allow the bath to cool to a comfortable temperature, then soak for 20 minutes or more. Soak as often as you like.

HEALING OATMEAL

½ cup old-fashioned rolled oats (not instant)
1 cup water
1 tablespoon honey
½ cup cream or coconut milk (optional)
1 tablespoon butter (or nondairy butter)
Pinch of salt

Place the oats in a medium saucepan, add the water, and set over medium heat. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low, cover the pot, and simmer for 5 minutes. Let rest and slightly cool. Add the honey to sweeten, cream, if using, and the butter, and stir. Enjoy. Add chopped dried fruit or a dollop of yogurt if desired.

Serve the oatmeal to anyone overcoming a fever or a cold, especially if it is a dry, irritating cough.[8]

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1 Sharol Marie Tilgner et al., *Herbal ABC's: The Foundation of Herbal Medicine* (Wise Acres, 2018), 280.

2 Jutta C. Burger et al., "Molecular Insights into the Evolution of Crop Plants," *American Journal of Botany* 95, no. 2 (2008): 113–22.

3 Rolf H. J. Schlegel, *History of Plant Breeding* (CRC Press, 2017).

4 William A. R. Thompson, *Healing Plants: A Modern Herbal* (Macmillan, 1978).

5 S. B. Alaoui, "*Avena sativa*," EcoPort project website, June 3, 2017, https://ecoports.com.

6 H. Sher et al., “Indigenous Knowledge of Folk Medicines Among Tribal Minorities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Northwestern Pakistan,” *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 166 (May 2015): 157–67.

7 Sharol Marie Tilgner et al., *Herbal ABC’s: The Foundation of Herbal Medicine* (Wise Acres, 2018), 279.

8 Elisabeth Brooke, *Traditional Western Herbal Medicine* (Aeon Books, 2019), 135.

61. ORANGE

CITRUS SPP.

Rutaceae family

CAUTION: *Generally regarded as safe.*

ORIGINS: Oranges are native to Asia, but they are now widespread in tropical climates around the world, as well as in hotter areas of the Mediterranean region.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: *Citrus sinensis* is an evergreen, flowering tree with large spines on its branches. The leaves are alternate, with narrowly winged petioles. Their shapes can vary and range from oblong to oval, bluntly toothed; when crushed, they emit a strong scent. The fruits are round, yellow to orange, and rough looking, with a thick, textured peel. The flowers have five white petals.[1]

PART USED: flowers, peel, fruit, buds, leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: stimulating, warming, carminative

TASTE: sweet, bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: cardamom

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Oranges can be gathered in great quantity in places where they grow wild. Wild oranges are often bitter, not sweet like ones you can buy at the store. This makes them excellent for medicines. Pick the fruits as you would any other; it doesn't harm the plant to harvest its fruits, but be mindful to

not overharvest. Ensure if harvesting from near roadsides that the trees are far enough away to not be covered in exhaust fumes.

TRADITIONAL USES: In Ayurveda, the word *agni* is used to describe the digestive fire that transforms food into our body's tissues. In Unani Tibb, a Greek Arabic medicine tradition, the word *pepsin* is used to describe the similar furnace-like power of the digestive system. *Spleen qi* in traditional Chinese medicine is a similar concept, in which digestive heat is needed to digest food. Orange has been seen in each of these traditions as a builder of the warming heat needed to keep a well-functioning digestive tract.[2] It has been used for digestion for centuries. Orange was used in early American medicine for the same purposes, an idea no doubt learned from Asian and Arabic medicine practitioners.

MODERN USES: Orange is a multifaceted medicine, and maybe that is why the fruit is so beloved around the world. Oranges are nutritionally medicinal, as they are rich in antioxidants because of their vitamin C content. The peels make for fantastic digestives and are a great addition to bitters and digestive formulas. They can also help with a lack of gastric acid, slow and sluggish digestion, bloating, cramps, and constipation. Oranges are helpful to the nervous system, as all bitters are, by assisting in good digestion and gut health. Gut health is often the first step toward better nervous system health.

The antioxidant content of oranges makes them a wonderful herb for cardiovascular health. Eating the fruits in moderation is a great way to get these valuable compounds as part of a heart-healthy diet. The flavonoids found in the peel are also helpful as anti-inflammatory compounds to treat respiratory problems like colds and bronchitis, as well as other tissue inflammation. Every time you peel one, just save the peel and dry it out for medicine!

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

ORANGE PEEL BITTERS

If the oranges are not organic, be sure to scrub them well to remove pesticides and waxes. If desired, add 1 teaspoon each of other carminative and bitter herbs, such as cardamom, cinnamon, dock, dandelion, clove, and/or cinnamon.

3 cups chopped orange peels (fresh is best but dried will do!)
Other herbs (optional)
2 cups brandy
2 cups honey

Place the orange peels in a 1-quart glass jar. Add the herbs, then pour in the brandy and honey. Stir, lid, then place in a dark place to steep for 1 month.

When ready to use, strain well and store in a lidded jar in a cool, dark place; it will keep for 1 to 5 years.

Use 1 to 3 dropperfuls in ¼ cup of warm water before a meal or for indigestion.

CANDIED ORANGE PEEL

For mocktails and cocktails, this is delicious and also gently carminative. For a restorative beverage, add 2 tablespoons of it to a glass of seltzer with a fresh slice of citrus of your choice.

4 or 5 large organic oranges
2 cups sugar, divided
2 cups water
Pinch of salt
Dash of vanilla extract (optional)

Peel the oranges and remove the white pith. Cut the peels into 4-inch-long strips that are ¼ inch wide. Place the peels in a medium saucepan and add 1 cup of the sugar, the water, and salt. Set the pot over medium-low heat and bring to a boil, then reduce the heat and gently simmer for about 20 minutes. You want them tender and orange-colored. Turn off the heat and let the oranges soak in the syrup for 15 minutes while it cools. Feel free to add the vanilla now, if desired.

Use tongs to lift them and place on a piece of wax paper to cool. If desired, transfer the syrup to a glass jar and keep in the fridge (see headnote).

Place the remaining 1 cup sugar in a wide, shallow bowl. When the peels have cooled, in about 15 minutes, toss them in the sugar until well coated, then transfer to a clean sheet of wax paper to stiffen. Store the candied peels in a glass jar in the fridge, covered, for a few weeks.

These candied peels can be eaten to settle an upset stomach, chopped to add to salads as a digestive treat, or just enjoyed as a confection.

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1 D. A. Goldhamer et al., “Citrus,” in *Crop Yield Response to Water: FAO Irrigation and Drainage*, ed. P. Pasquale Steduto et al. (UN Food and Agriculture Organization, 2012), 49:300–15.

2 Heather Luna, “Citrus,” ACORN School of Herbal Medicine website, n.d., https://www.acornherbschool.com/citrus-peel.

62. OREGON GRAPE

BERBERIS SPP. (FORMERLY *MAHONIA*)

Berberidaceae family

CAUTION: *Do not take during pregnancy or while nursing. Check interactions with specific pharmaceuticals before taking.*

ORIGINS: Oregon grape is native to British Columbia, Washington state, Oregon, northern California, and northern Idaho.[1] It is now considered invasive in eastern North America, and has naturalized in parts of Europe.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: These helpful shrubs are easy to identify because of their leathery, holly-like leaves, which can pack a powerful punch with their prickles. They grow 2 to 10 feet tall and have tightly packed yellow flowers that give way to lovely blue-purple berries. The fruits have a glaucous coating (a waxy coating like a grape's exterior). The plant's woody stems are yellow on the inside when cut. The roots are also very yellow and often extensive and large. Despite being invasive, in some places Oregon grape is frequently planted ornamentally.

PART USED: stems, bark, roots, fruit

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: antimicrobial, antiseptic, digestive, antifungal, cooling, drying

TASTE: bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: echinacea

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: These are often considered invasive plants on the East Coast of North America, meaning you can harvest the whole plant to help control local plant populations. If you are harvesting Oregon grape in its native habitat, the stem's inner bark is as useful as its roots, and so you do not need to dig up the entire plant. Some independent chromatography has even shown there to be more berberine, or one of the main desirable medicinal compounds, in the stems than in the root![2] Just snip a bit here and there from the stems, peel with a sharp knife, and tincture or dry the inner bark for decoction.

TRADITIONAL USES: In what is today known as British Columbia, there are about 200 Indigenous groups, many of which have historically worked with this plant for medicine and food, and still do.[3] The golden, yellow roots also make a lovely dye that has been an important part of this plant's history. The Indigenous Nations of the State of Washington also have worked with this plant for generations. The Squaxin people have used the root infusion as a gargle for sore throats and to purify the blood. The Swinomish have used the tea as a general tonic.[4] The Sanpoil have used the root decoction for digestive diseases and as a wash for infected eyes.[5]

MODERN USES: Berberine is one of the potent medicinal compounds that make the roots and stems of this plant yellow. Though considered an invasive weed in many places, it is incredibly helpful in treating infection. A tincture and tea made from the roots can help with certain staph infections, salmonella, and even giardia. Skin conditions that result from liver issues are also aided with this beautiful plant. It is also blood cleansing, meaning it aids in the removal of waste products by supporting liver metabolism.[6] In these cases, you can take Oregon grape tincture or tea along with activated charcoal tablets. Adding it to formulas for respiratory infections is helpful as well, especially when there are multiple infections or coinfections.

The decoction of the root can be helpful as a soak for infected wounds. Additionally, the plant has helpful antifungal activity and can be used as a sitz bath for yeast infections—it is particularly helpful with *candida*. The berries are

an Indigenous North American food, and you can use them to make wine or wild soda, as well as jam. Just remove the large seeds!

The helpful constituents in Oregon grape are mostly water soluble, so you can make salves with it, but they are not always as effective as using the diluted tincture or a topical decoction.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

OREGON GRAPE ROOT TINCTURE

1:2, 75%: fresh root

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 30 to 60 drops three times a day for acute infections or use topically diluted in some water as it will sting!

OREGON GRAPE ROOT DECOCTION

1 cup shredded stem inner bark or root
4 cups water

Place the bark in a medium saucepan and add the water. Set over medium-low heat and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat, cover, and simmer for 30 minutes.

Pour the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer into a 1-quart glass jar. Once cool, cover the jar with the lid and store in the fridge 2 to 3 days.

Use as a soak or compress on a troublesome wound, as a sitz bath for the urogenital area, or to drink for gut infections. If drinking, take 2 to 6 cups a day spaced every 2 to 3 hours.

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1 "Oregon Grape," Midwest Invasive Species Information Network website, Michigan State University, www.misin.msu.edu/facts/detail/?id=224.

2 Elise Krohn, "Oregon Grape," Wild Foods and Medicines website, n.d., https://wildfoodsandmedicines.com/oregon-grape/.

3 Robert James Muckle, *The First Nations of British Columbia: An Anthropological Survey* (University of British Columbia Press, 2007), 6.

4 Erna Gunther, *Ethnobotany of Western Washington*, rev. ed. (University of Washington Press, 1973), 30.

5 Verne F. Ray, *The Sanpoil and Nespelem: Salishan Peoples of Northeastern Washington*, vol. 5 (University of Washington Publications in Anthropology, 1932), 219.

6 Scott Kloos, *Pacific Northwest Medicinal Plants: Identify, Harvest, and Use 120 Wild Herbs for Health and Wellness* (Timber Press, 2017), 126.

63. PARTRIDGEBERRY

MITCHELLA REPENS

Rubiaceae family

CAUTION: *Avoid when pregnant.*

ORIGINS: This small, leathery-leaved perennial is native to North America and grows in moist woodlands, often near rhododendrons and is often found at the base of gradually sloped mountains.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: This short creeping plant grows along the ground. It has opposite, leathery, evergreen leaves with no teeth; the leaves are about the size of a dime. They have a pale white stripe down the center. Two small tubular white flowers form a brilliant red berry at their base. The berry retains marks from the two flowers as they die back, giving the berries the appearance of a pig nose with two nostril holes.

PART USED: berries, leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: cooling, uterine tonic, astringent

TASTE: sweet

SUBSTITUTIONS: cramp bark, pipsissewa

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Partridgeberry grows in abundance in certain areas of its range, but as a native plant, it must be harvested with care. Do not pull the plants up by the roots and use sharp scissors to snip the leaves sparingly to ensure

you don't kill the plant. It is not difficult to grow this plant in a damp, shady wooded garden.

TRADITIONAL USES: This beautiful evergreen has been used by diverse groups of North American Indigenous women extensively for menstrual cramps, delayed and irregular menses, and heavy menstrual flow. Poultices made from the warmed leaves have been used for a variety of skin ailments, including sore nipples, wounds, and even hemorrhoids.[1] The berries were used to treat dysentery historically in Cherokee medicine.[2]

MODERN USES: Partridgeberry is still used largely as it once was. The leaf tincture and tea or decoction are given to help regulate menses and for a wide variety of other uterine and menses-related imbalances. The tea from leaves is used for kidney and bladder issues like urinary tract infections and its gently astringent nature is also helpful for mild diarrhea.[3] It is especially good when people are experiencing weakness and infertility. The tincture is helpful for those who have had miscarriages and are trying to become pregnant again. The tea is a uterine tonic and for labor in the final stages of pregnancy. It is also useful as a wash for vaginal discharge. The fruits are also edible and make a delightful, vaguely wintergreen-flavored trail nibble.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

PARTRIDGEBERRY TINCTURE

1:2, 80%: fresh leaves
1:5, 75%: dried

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 20 to 30 drops three times a day.

PARTRIDGEBERRY DECOCTION

You can also add this decoction to warm water in a sitz bath to treat vaginal discharge.

2 tablespoons chopped fresh partridge berry leaves
2 cups water

Place the leaves in a small saucepan and add the water. Set over medium-low heat and simmer for 20 minutes.

Pour the liquid through a fine-mesh strainer and place in a small glass jar for storage. Drink 1 cup three times a day.

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1 James William Herrick, “Iroquois Medical Botany” (PhD thesis, State University of New York, Albany, 1977), 441.

2 Paul B. Hamel and Mary U. Chiltoskey, *Cherokee Plants and Their Uses: A 400 Year History* (Herald Publishing, 1975), 47.

3 Author conversations with Juliet Blankespoor.

64. PEACH

PRUNUS PERSICA

Rosaceae family

CAUTION: *The kernel and wilted leaves both contain some traces of cyanogenic glycosides toxins, which are best avoided internally. Not advised for long-term use in those with chronic fatigue. Always use fresh or fully dried leaves and bark for medicine making, as the wilting process increases the cyanogenic compounds.*

ORIGINS: The peach originated in Persia and central Asia but is now widespread in temperate regions around the world. Peach trees were introduced in St. Augustine, Florida, by Spanish monks in the mid-1500s. Indigenous peoples throughout the Southeast and as far north as modern-day Philadelphia planted peaches and tended peach groves, spreading them throughout North America.[1]

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: This deciduous tree can grow to between 13 and 30 feet tall, with slender, curving, finely toothed leaves and fuzzy-skinned golden to orange/red, rounded fruits bearing a dimple down their center.

PART USED: leaves, bark, fruit

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: cooling, nervine

TASTE: sweet, sour

SUBSTITUTIONS: rose hip, mimosa flowers

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Look for windfallen branches to make bark medicines. When that is not possible, cut the branches carefully.

TRADITIONAL USES: Peach trees have a long history of use in traditional Chinese medicine. The kernels and pits specifically are called *tao ren* and are often mixed with safflower in remedies for pain, especially when it has been caused by a condition called "blood stasis."[2] In traditional Yemeni medicine, the leaves have been used to treat for parasites and worms.[3]

Peach can be said to have been seen as a cure-all. Peaches, though originally from Asia, were adopted into Indigenous and then Southern folk medicine readily, owing to their delicious taste and medicinal value. The peach leaf was an important part of Black folk medicine in the Southern United States as well, and was specifically used as a decoction in conjunction with red oak bark for fevers and malaria. The leaf tea was also used in Black communities to treat upper respiratory infections, and sore throats as a gargle. The leaf was also used for diabetes.[4]

The leaf tincture and tea were important nervines and medicine for burns and skin irritations. Leaf tea was used for bladder complaints, while the leaves were also used in poultices for treating boils and wounds that were hard to heal.[5] The tree root bark was once used for tea to treat dysentery. Peach leaves and root bark were also mixed with dogwood bark for fevers, especially the intermittent fevers caused by tuberculosis.

MODERN USES: Peach tastes so sweet to us, calming the overly inflamed and the overactive nervous system. It is a wonderful remedy for inflammatory responses, from histamine responses in allergies (Caution: *It is not a replacement for EpiPens!*) to food intolerances. Peach leaf tea and tincture can soothe mild allergic responses to foods, bug bites, and other environmental factors.

Peach is also a gentle digestive, and the tea and its fruits help moisten the digestive tract in those who are elderly or bedridden.[6] When sipped, the juice of the fruit and warm tea sipped are great for nausea in children and morning sickness. (*Caution: Do not use the pit while pregnant.*)

Reminder: Always use either very fresh or fully dried leaves and bark for medicine making, as the wilting process increases the cyanogenic compounds.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

COOLING PEACH OXYMEL

If you like, add some fresh mimosa flowers, a piece of cinnamon stick, or other flowers or fruits you like to the mix (for a digestive, add cinnamon, cardamom, and ginger; for a cooling nervine, add rose petals and mimosa flowers). Fresh raspberries also are a good addition.

Roughly 3 cups chopped pitted ripe peaches
2 cups organic apple cider vinegar (or other vinegar with at least 5% acidity)
2 cups raw honey
Additional flavorings (see headnote)

Place the peaches in a 1-quart wide-mouth glass canning jar, pour in the vinegar and honey, and stir well with a wooden spoon. If desired, add the extra flavorings. Place a square of wax paper on the top, and then add the lid. Let the jar sit somewhere cool and dark for about 2 weeks; stir it a couple of times a week.

Pour the mixture through a strainer into a large bowl. Rinse the jar and then pour the liquid back into it. Cover with the lid and store for 6 to 8 months in a cool, dark place.

Note: You can use the fruit leftovers! Use a blender to make a paste, then spread the paste on a sheet of wax paper and leave out to dehydrate. Once hardened, cut the fruit leather into strips and enjoy for an easy snack.

PEACH LEAF VINEGAR

Keep this in a small spray bottle in the fridge and use during the summer months to spray on itchy bug bites, poison ivy, and other “summer leg” conditions. You can also consume this if you or a loved one wants an alcohol-free drink.

About 3 cups chopped fresh peach leaves
4 cups organic apple cider vinegar

Place the leaves in a 1-quart glass jar and add the vinegar. Stir with a wooden spoon and press down to make sure all the leaves are submerged. Place a square of wax paper on top and then add the lid. Put in a cool, dark spot to steep for 2 to 4 weeks, occasionally stirring to freshen the mix.

Pour the mixture through a strainer into a large measuring cup. Rinse the jar and then pour the liquid back in. Cover with the lid and keep up to a year in a cool, dark place.

Use this as an topical treatment for external itchiness like ant bites, bee stings, and poison ivy rashes.

PEACH LEAF TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh leaves

1:5, 60%: dried leaves

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. The dosage can vary from 15 drops to 30 drops for its nervine uses and up to 2 or 3 dropperfuls at a time for inflammatory reactions.

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1 Rebecca Beyer, *Mountain Magic* (Quarto Group, 2022).

2 Dagmar Riley et al., *Treating Pain with Traditional Chinese Medicine* (Paradigm, 2003), 212.

3 Anne Regourd et al., eds., *Herbal Medicine in Yemen: Traditional Knowledge and Practice, and Their Value for Today's World* (Brill, 2012), 210.

4 Herbert C. Covey, *African American Slave Medicine* (Lexington Books, 2007), 156; Michele E. Lee. *Working the Roots: Over 400 Years of Traditional African American Healing* (Wadastick, 2014).

5 Darryl Patton, *Mountain Medicine: The Herbal Remedies of Tommie Bass* (Natural Reader Press, 2004), 150.

6 Liz Neves, *Northeast Medicinal Plants: Identify, Harvest, and Use 111 Wild Herbs for Health and Wellness* (Timber Press, 2020), 269.

65. PENNYROYAL

MENTHA PULEGIUM

Lamiaceae family

CAUTION: *The essential oil is toxic. Do not ingest. Do not use during pregnancy or while breastfeeding.*

ORIGINS: Pennyroyal is native to Asia and Europe. The word *pulegium* comes from the Roman antiquarian belief that the plant drove away fleas. The name is most likely a vernacular creation of *Pulioll-royal,* the old herbalist's name for this plant, over time becoming *penny royal*. The plant is most common in Morocco, Italy, Turkey, Portugal, Tunisia, and Spain.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: This little mint family plant has some of the smallest leaves, which are oval and gently toothed. Pennyroyal is strongly fragrant when crushed and has small, tubular, lilac-colored, lipped flowers that appear in "poofs" down their stems.

PART USED: aerial parts

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: cooling, stimulating, enlivening; carminative, diaphoretic, stimulant, emmenagogue

TASTE: bitter, aromatic, pungent

SUBSTITUTIONS: any mint

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Like most members of the mint family, penny royal grows rapidly and is easy to propagate and grow. It's often necessary to pull up

the roots occasionally to prevent it from spreading too much in a garden.

TRADITIONAL USES: Dioscorides, an ancient Greek physician and botanist, described pennyroyal as a plant that produces a hot temperament and soothes the throat. He espoused its abilities to ease the discomfort of the menses and its use as an abortifacient. He prescribed it to be eaten fresh with vinegar for nausea and to revive those fallen in fainting spells. The powdered burnt leaf was used as a gum medicine, rubbed along the gum line. Ancient Persian physician and scholar Ibn Sinā mentioned it for use on scorpion stings and pointed to its role as a clearer of phlegm.[1]

Pennyroyal was historically used in food preparations, particularly in England as an ingredient in hog puddings, until it was replaced by less intensely flavored herbs. It was once also a flavoring for a stuffing that included pepper and honey.[2] Pliny recommended one should hang penny- royal in sleeping rooms, and he even said it was more beneficial than roses, once considered a near panacea. Pennyroyal was also thought to clear toxins from water, so the leaves were put into questionable water to render it drinkable. It was used as a blood cleanser for this same reason.

The herb was used for headaches throughout western Europe and was mixed with vinegar to be used topically for ulcers, wounds, and even leprosy. Mixed with honey, it was given for whooping cough, or "hooping-cough" as it was once known in herbals. Pennyroyal was also used as a warm infusion after a sudden chill or cold. As its name refers to its use for fleas, it was also served as a tea for pinworms and other parasites.

MODERN USES: Pennyroyal is best known as a powerful stimulator of menstruation and also used to strengthen uterine contractions. Large doses of it are one of the best-known historical abortifacients, but its use as an essential oil resulted in many injuries or even deaths. The plant is safe in small doses as a tea for most people, but caution should always be taken, especially when sharing medicine with others.

When the plant parts are gathered during the summer, the tea and tincture are good digestives and for congestion-laden colds. Headaches and gout also

benefit from the tea. Like many other mints, pennyroyal is a fine fever medicine and in general is a helpful cold remedy, especially in the early stages of sickness.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

PENNYROYAL TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh flowering herb

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 10 to 30 drops no more than three times a day for digestive upsets and the onset of colds.

MEDICINAL PENNYROYAL HONEY STUFFING

2 tablespoons chopped fresh pennyroyal
1 tablespoon chopped garlic
2 tablespoons honey
½ cup chopped walnuts or chestnuts
2 slices stale bread, cubed
Olive oil or melted butter, for drizzling
Salt and pepper

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Lightly grease an 8-inch baking pan.

In a medium bowl, combine the pennyroyal, garlic, honey, nuts, and bread cubes. Mix well. Spread out in the baking pan and drizzle with the oil, then season with the salt and pepper. Bake for 35 minutes.

Serve along with pork, venison, a vegan protein, or sautéed mushrooms and enjoy the digestive help of the pennyroyal.

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1 Ibn Sinā, *al-Qānun fi'l-tebb*, ed. Adwār Alqaš and 'Ali Zaygur, 4 vols, (1408/1987).

2 Madame Grieve, *A Modern Herbal* (Stone Basin Books, 1931/1992), 625.

66. PEPPERMINT

MENTHA X PIPERITA

Lamiaceae family

CAUTION: *The essential oils of mint can be harmful to infants and children.*

ORIGINS: Peppermint most likely originated in North Africa, where it has been used in medicine and culinary since 1500 BCE. It is one of the oldest recorded medicinal herbs, and it has now spread worldwide. Peppermint gets its genus name from Menthe, the beautiful but unfortunate nymph of Greek mythology who was transformed into a mint plant by the jealous wife of Pluto, Persephone.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Mints are low-growing herbaceous plants with tender, green, lance-shaped toothed leaves that grow opposite one another on their stems. The flowers are small, lipped tubulars of white, pale pink, and light purple. The leaves release a strong minty aroma when crushed.

PART USED: aerial parts

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: stimulating, carminative, antispasmodic, diaphoretic, digestive, antiseptic

TASTE: sweet, spicy

SUBSTITUTIONS: lemon balm

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Mint can often be found as an escapee from gardens in moist places where it spreads readily. It can be strongly competitive among other plants; sometimes pulling peppermint up by the roots is important to prevent its taking over entire areas.

TRADITIONAL USES: Mint has long been used as a respiratory medicine around the world because of its ability to open the airways with its intense aromatic oils. It has also been used as a digestive to settle upset stomachs and relieve gas and bloating. Egyptian traditions dating back to 1550 BCE mention mint as a medicine for digestion and to ease gas. Jewish traditions throughout the world have included mint as a medicinal food preparation, as in cucumber, mint, and sumac salads. Ali b. Abbā Majusi, physician of the Buyid king in Fars,

in 936 CE, mentioned the use of mint infused into vinegar for vomiting and faintness.[1]

The Persians used and continue to use mint for a wide variety of culinary and medicinal applications. It has been used for coughs, grippe, and general phlegm conditions. It is used in many food dishes as well, including their delicious treat *sekanjabin*, which is made from honey or sugar, vinegar, and mint. The Greeks were inspired by Arabic and other Islamic writers in their use and descriptions of mint, and so it greatly influenced the ways in which this plant is used today.

MODERN USES: Mint is an underappreciated digestive and respiratory aid. (It is interesting to note that sometimes, the more exotic and rarer an herb is, the more it is believed to be a nearly universal healing aid. This, however, causes many problems in herbalism, as it encourages the overharvesting of certain plants while ignoring the incredible usefulness and healing potentials of more abundant herbs, like mint.)

Mint is a powerful medicine, internally and externally. The menthol content it contains is a large part of its magic. Its oils are powerfully antiseptic, antifungal, and cooling when applied topically. A wash of mint leaves is excellent to relieve itching and cool burns, both sunburn and scaldings. It also helps relieve headaches when applied as a cold tea compress to the forehead or the back of the neck. Mint tea is a great reliever of gas and stomach bloating and is even helpful in irritable bowel syndrome, acting as a powerful cooling remedy.

In Thailand and Vietnam, fresh mint leaves are served alongside broths and soups to aid digestion, while in Morocco and much of the Middle East mint tea is enjoyed throughout the day as a cooling and invigorating, pleasurable beverage.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

PEPPERMINT WASH

½ cup fresh mint leaves
2 cups freshly boiled water

Place the mint leaves in a glass jar and add the hot water. Cover and let steep for 30 minutes. Strain and use this infusion to moisten a clean cloth and apply as a warm

compress on irritated and itchy skin, poison ivy, and other rashes.

PEPPERMINT TINCTURE

1:2, 75%: fresh leaves

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 30 to 50 drops three times a day for indigestion, gas, and bloating.

PEPPERMINT INHALATION

½ cup fresh peppermint leaves
2 cups freshly boiled water

Place the mint leaves in a medium heat-proof bowl and pour in the hot water. Drape a towel over your head and lower your face to just above the bowl to capture the steam rising. Have tissues nearby to blow your nose as your nose clears.

Caution: *Be careful with the hot steam. Steam burns are very serious.*

PEPPERMINT OXYMEL

This is an ancient Persian medicine-making tradition.

3 cups chopped fresh peppermint (or other mint)
2 cups organic apple cider vinegar (or other vinegar with at least 5% acidity)
2 cups raw honey

Place the mint in a 1-quart glass jar and crush it slightly with your hands or a wooden spoon. Pour in the vinegar and honey. Stir to ensure all the mint is submerged. Cover the jar with a square of wax paper and then add the lid. Let sit overnight in a cool, dark spot, then stir again the next morning. Re-cover and let sit for 2 weeks.

Strain and store in a glass jar with a lid in a cool place for up to 8 months.

Use a bit of this oxymel in salad dressings, added to seltzer or hot tea, or just take a spoonful when you have a sore throat, cough, or cold.

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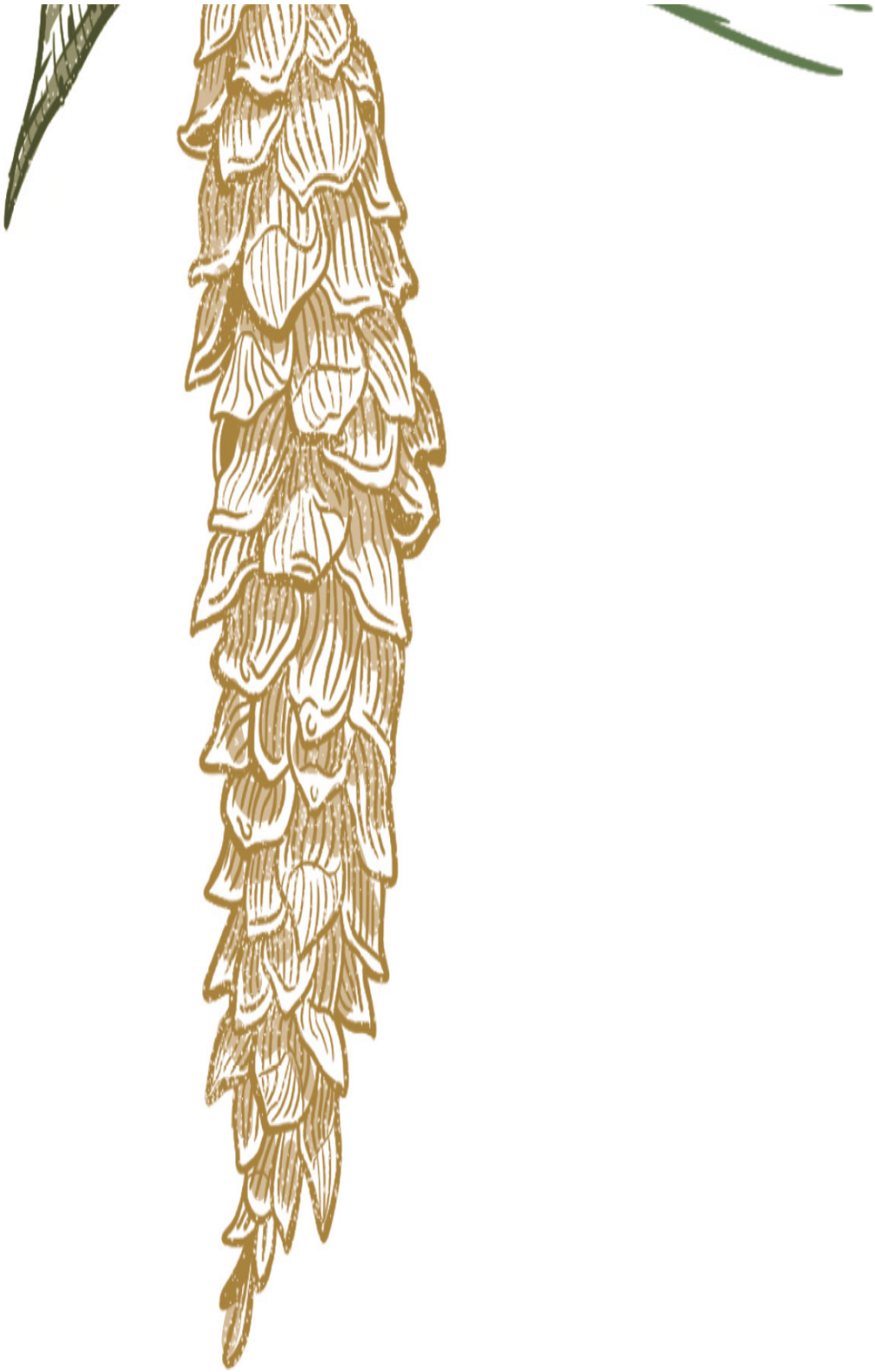
1 Shamameh Mohammadifar, "Mint," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, January 1, 2000, https://iranicaonline.org/articles/mint-herb.

67. PINE, WHITE PINE

PINUS STROBUS

Pinaceae family



CAUTION: *Some people have allergies to pine. Always ensure you do not harvest yew (*Taxus *spp), a toxic lookalike to some pine species, by ensuring your pine has cones and needles that are fragrant and no hollow red arils that look like berries.*

ORIGINS: White pine is native to North America and Canada. The trees are prevalent from Newfoundland and Canada through the Great Lakes region and to Minnesota. They can also be found farther south along the Appalachian Mountain Range to northern Georgia and Alabama.[1] Indeed, white pines are grown throughout the temperate world and are known as Weymouth pine in the United Kingdom. Pines have naturalized in parts of the Carpathian Mountains and can be found in southern Poland and the Czech Republic.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: White pine is a tall tree surrounded by rings of branches. It has five needles in one bundle, known as a fascicle, on its scaly branches and long pine cones that grow during autumn in temperate climates. Pines in general are identifiable by their fragrant needlelike leaves that occur in bundles of two or more as well as by their cones!

PART USED: resin, pine needles, bark

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: antioxidant, warming, stimulating, antiseptic, vulnerary, antimicrobial

TASTE: aromatic, pungent

SUBSTITUTIONS: juniper

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: There are over 100 species of pine worldwide, all of which are used for food and medicine. The general abundance of white pine in temperate climates makes this plant a good choice for herbal medicine. Windfallen branches and wounded trees are common in all places that pines grow, so there should be no need to harm a tree to harvest its resin. To avoid becoming a sticky mess while collecting the resin, cover a broad knife and your

hands with olive oil, then scrape the resin chunks into a jar. You can then use the jar to make an infused oil or salve. Gather needles any time as they are evergreen.

TRADITIONAL USES: In North America, Indigenous Nations like the Chippewa, Iroquois, Ojibwa, Micmac, Mohegan, and Potawatami all have used white pine resin for wounds.[2] About 20 other species of pines have historical medicinal uses in North America and mirror the uses of white pine, but each species has its own unique history and indications. The use of "pine top tea," or the new growing tips of white pine branches, as an herbal steam was adopted in Southern American folk medicine by people of all races and became an important part of Southern and Appalachian folk medicine. The tea was used for bowel complaints and colds. Soaking the pine wood in water also produced a remedy for typhoid fever.[3]

MODERN USES: Pine resins, or the fragrant and sticky substance trees leak from their injured parts, make an excellent antiseptic. The resin helps heal old or slow-to-heal wounds and minor infections when infused in oil and made into a salve. This salve is also helpful for inflamed, sore joints. Pine needles are rich in many beneficial compounds and are antioxidant. The needles can be made into tea any time of year, but fresh growth in the spring makes a delicious vitamin C–rich tea that is great for immune support, colds, and respiratory infections.

When an herbal steam is desired, adding monarda, oregano, and mint to the pine needles is wonderful way to help move stuck phlegm. This combination also makes a great tea—try adding catnip instead of oregano (since oregano is a strong taste) for a child-friendly cold remedy. The needle tea is diuretic and can stimulate urination,[4] a helpful first remedy for urinary tract infections. The bark is an antiseptic medicine and can be decocted and strained; the resulting liquid can be used externally in a warm compress to treat joint pain and rheumatic pains.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

PINE NEEDLE TEA

If desired, add fresh mint, monarda, yarrow, elderflower, or violet leaves to this mix and infuse for treating coughs, colds, and flu.

2 cups chopped fresh pine needles
About 4 cups freshly boiled water
Honey (optional)

Place the pine needles in a 1-quart glass jar and add the hot water. Cover with the lid and steep for 30 minutes.

Pour the tea through a strainer. Taste and sweeten with honey, if desired. You can store the excess tea for 2 to 3 days in the fridge.

Drink freely, reheating if desired.

PINE NEEDLE STEAM

Steams are great ways to deal with the congestion of colds and other respiratory illnesses.

1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon dried monarda
¼ cup fresh pine needles
1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint
4 cups freshly boiled water

Place the oregano, monarda, pine needles, and mint in a medium heat-proof bowl. Pour in the hot water and allow the herbs to infuse for a moment. Drape a towel over your head and lower your face over the bowl to trap the steam. Inhale the fragrant steam through the nose and out the mouth. Take breaks to blow your nose into tissues nearby.

Caution: *Do not burn yourself with the hot steam; place a hand over the bowl to test it before putting your face to it. Steam burns can be very serious.*

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1 "*Pinus strobus*," PLANTS Database, National Plant Data Team, U.S. Department of Agriculture, n.d., https://srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/misc/ag_654/volume_1/pinus/strobus.htm.

2 Melvin R. Gilmore, *Some Chippewa Uses of Plants* (University of Michigan Press, 1933), 123.

3 Newman Ivey White and Frank Clyde Brown, *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore: The Folklore of North Carolina* (Duke University Press, 1952).

4 J. K. Crellin et al., *A Reference Guide to Medicinal Plants* (Duke University Press, 1990).

68. PLANTAIN

PLANTAGO MAJOR, P. LANCEOLATA, P. RUGELII, P. VIRGINICA

Plantaginaceae family

CAUTION: *Those on digitoxin, lithium, or blood thinners should avoid prolonged heavy doses of this herb.*

ORIGINS: There are species native to Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, and North America, but many plants in this family now grow worldwide and are considered cosmopolitan.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Plantain is a common plant in temperate North America and is one of a few species for which all parts can be used for food and medicine. These perennials grow in a basal rosette with smooth-margined, oval-shaped leaves. The petiole will be green in the case of *Plantago major* and reddish to purple for *P. rugellii*. *P. virginica* is much hairier than the other two.[1] These all have parallel veins running down their oval leaves, which when broken appear to leave little strings behind.

PART USED: whole plant

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: cooling, drying, astringent, antimicrobial, moistening, nourishing, nutritive, anodyne, alterative, vulnerary

TASTE: astringent

SUBSTITUTIONS: dock

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Plantains are readily available and widely distributed in areas that have compacted soil. Be careful not to harvest from contaminated roadsides and driveways where car pollution may render them toxic. The plants often grow back more fervently after a good mow or harvesting. Pick the leaves in spring and through the fall, even into winter in the milder areas of the Southeast.

TRADITIONAL USES: Plantain has been used for wound healing in the traditional medicine of many cultures all over the world. Norwegians and Swedes call this plant *groblad*, which can be translated as "healing leaves." The crushed fresh leaves and juice applied directly to wounds is mentioned in the ethnobotany of many countries and cultures, from Russia to India.[2]

Plantain was known as *weybroed*, or *waybread*, in Old English. It is one of the herbs mentioned in the Nine Herbs Charm, which was gathered from Anglo-Saxon England in the tenth century. It contains instructions to make a wound healing salve. The herb is mentioned throughout the world in medical writings from ancient Greece to medieval Islamic Spain, often used as crushed whole leaves or mixed with honey for wounds.

In America, plantain was sometimes known as *snakeroot* or *snakeweed* and was used by Appalachians and folks in the South to treat snakebites. There was an enslaved healer of African ancestry named Caesar who discovered this cure. It was so effective he was rewarded for his discovery by being set free by the South Carolina General Assembly in 1750, and he was allotted an annual stipend for the duration of his life. (This is an important instance of how stories about plants are told and which ones are told and why. The ways in which Black folk medicine practitioners developed herbal cures in lands they were forced to inhabit is a story often omitted from the *materia medica*. Caesar is one of the few Black healers whose story was written down before the 1900s.)

MODERN USES: Plantain is one of the most popular plants in Western herbalism because of its wide availability and relatively easy identification, as well as its myriad uses. It is known primarily as a wound herb and first-aid remedy, but it is helpful for so much more. Plantain is effective at drawing out infections;

it is also useful for coughs, colds, hoarseness, and indigestion. You can use a tea from plantain leaves as an external wash, soak, and poultice for splinters, scrapes, minor wounds, and bruising. A gentle decoction of the fresh leaves is excellent as a foot soak for an infected or ingrown toenail, splinter, or other small wounds. You can also chew a bit of the leaves in a pinch and use the paste as a temporary poultice for beestings and bug bites.

The leaf tea is especially when mixed with other demulcent herbs like marshmallow (cold-infused in water) and calendula. Or, mix the tea with a berberine-containing herb for urinary tract infections. It pairs excellently with an Oregon grape root tincture for this purpose and is a fine combination of antiseptic herb and soothing herb. Plantain seeds can be boiled into a gruel of sorts and taken by the spoonful for diarrhea and serious stomachaches.

Add plantain leaves to sitz baths to soothe hemorrhoids, itchy skin, or irritations, sometimes along with astringent and soothing plants like blackberry leaves or root, calendula, rose, and witch hazel. You can also infuse the dried leaves in oil to make first-aid ointments and even tattoo-healing balms. Plantain also has antiviral properties, and the ointment is helpful with cold sores.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

PLANTAIN LEAF TEA

3 cups chopped fresh plantain leaves
About 4 cups freshly boiled water

Place the plantain leaves in a 1-quart glass jar and pour in the hot water. Cover and let steep for 30 minutes.

Strain and store in the fridge in a glass jar with a lid for 2 to 3 days.

Drink this tea throughout the day for colds, cough and flu, or for urinary tract infection.

PLANTAIN LEAF SUCCUS

A succus is the preserved juice of an herb. To make this, you'll need a juicer.

5 large handfuls of plantain leaves,
No more than a few tablespoons of 95% alcohol
2 tablespoons honey (optional)

Juice the plantain leaves in a juicer. Measure the resulting liquid to determine how much alcohol you need; you want the ratio to be 1 part juice to 3 parts alcohol. Add the plantain

juice to a 1-pint glass jar and then pour in the alcohol. Add the honey, if using, then cover and store in the fridge or freeze in ice cube trays.

Use this succus directly on skin irritations and nonpuncture wounds or take it internally for gut issues as a nutritive boost or for its antimicrobial actions; for the latter, take 1 teaspoon up to three times a day mixed in tea or water.

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1 CoreyPine Shane, *Southeast Medicinal Plants* (Timber Press, 2021), 182.

2 A. B. Samuelsen, "The Traditional Uses, Chemical Constituents and Biological Activities of *Plantago major* L: A Review," *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 71, nos. 1–2 (2000): 1–21.

69. RABBIT TOBACCO, SWEET EVERLASTING, LIFE EVERLASTING, PEARLY EVERLASTING

PSEUDOGNAPHALIUM OBTUSIFOLIUM

Asteraceae family

CAUTION: *Not for use during pregnancy or while breastfeeding.*

ORIGINS: Native to the dry areas and fields of eastern North America.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: This low-growing plant has a rosette of silvery-green, thin leaves on a stalk that flowers in the plant's second year. The leaves are densely wooly with white silvery hairs. The small, silvery white flowers appear almost like small cones on the stalks, which remain standing from late summer when they flower until the following spring. This is one characteristic that gives them the plant its folk names of life everlasting or pearly everlasting.

PART USED: leaves, flowers

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: analgesic, expectorant, antispasmodic, and astringent

TASTE: sweet, fragrant

SUBSTITUTIONS: elderflowers

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This plant is native to the United States and should be harvested with care. You can find large stands of it in old fields and on back roads. Allow the stalks to dry and then, using sharp pruners, trim a bit from each plant, shaking out the seeds to aid in their dispersal. This is a lovely plant to grow in your garden or a container. This plant is culturally significant for both Black and Indigenous communities and should be regarded with care and honor.

TRADITIONAL USES: The Alabama, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, Koasati, Menominee, Meskwaki, Montagnais, Potawatomi, Rappahannock, and Murphee peoples all practiced medicine with this plant's aerial parts. Chiefly, the plant has been used for pain relief and as a muscle relaxant by applying the decocted tea and aerial parts externally. Other uses have included making a tea for nervousness and upset stomach. Rabbit tobacco was also a popular treatment for lung afflictions; coughs, sore throats, and lung pain, first among

these Indigenous Nations and then among settlers and enslaved populations in the American South. Alabama folk herbalist Tommie Bass used the plant as a vapor inhalation for coughs, reflecting his knowledge learned from Black and Indigenous women. In Appalachian folk medicine, it was a cure for coughs when mixed with wild cherry bark, sweet gum resin, maidenhair fern, and mullein.

Pillows stuffed with rabbit tobacco are said to have aided those who suffer from asthma attacks, according to Southern American folk medicine tradition. This treatment was even recommended for those with consumption or tuberculosis. Interestingly, the Lumbee and the Yuchi used rabbit tobacco smoke to treat people bothered by ghosts.[1]

The medicine of rabbit tobacco works best when the leaves are brown and have been touched by the first frost. This harvesting practice was common among Lumbee people and eventually spread to many others living in the South. Cherokee folks combined rabbit tobacco with Carolina vetch for rheumatism and muscle spasms and twitching. The tea was also commonly used for cramps and for bringing on menstruation more easily in Black communities in the American South. In Hoodoo medicine, one would smoke the dried leaves to relieve toothache. As the name implies, to live a long life and for a general charm against illness, it was recommended to drink the tea.

MODERN USES: Rabbit tobacco is a special and sacred plant that can greatly help in times of respiratory distress. A steam inhalation made from the aerial parts of the plant is effective for colds. An infusion, served warm, is also a wonderful remedy for chest pains and acts as a gentle nervine. Rabbit tobacco also makes an excellent addition to cough syrup recipes. Likewise, it can be added to herbal smoking blends to help calm the nerves; however, remember that smoking anything is damaging to the lungs.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

RABBIT TOBACCO COUGH SYRUP

This recipe is inspired by the long history of medicine making in the Southern Appalachians.

1 tablespoon chopped dried wild cherry bark
1 tablespoon dried mullein leaves
1 tablespoon dried rabbit tobacco leaves and flowers
1 tablespoon dried yarrow flowers and leaves
3 cups freshly boiled water
1 cup raw honey

Place the wild cherry bark, mullein, rabbit tobacco, and yarrow in a 1-quart glass jar. Pour the boiling water over the herbs, cover, and leave overnight to steep.

In the morning, pour the liquid through a strainer into a medium saucepan. Rinse the jar. Gently warm the liquid, then add the honey, gently stirring. Do not allow the mixture boil. Pour it back into the jar and allow to cool. Lid and store in the fridge for 2 weeks to 1 month.

RABBIT TOBACCO INHALATION

½ cup chopped dried rabbit tobacco
2 cups freshly boiled water

Place the rabbit tobacco in a medium bowl and add the hot water. Drape a towel over your head and lower it toward the bowl to inhale the steam. Have some tissues handy to blow your nose as you unstick the phlegm.

Try a steam two to three times a day for relieving a stuffy nose or head cold.

Caution: *Be careful of steam burn here and make sure not to place your face over the bowl before testing the heat of the steam with your hand.*

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1 Daniel E. Moerman, *Native American Ethnobotany* (Timber Press, 1998), 250.

70. RAGWEED

AMBROSIA ARTEMISIIFOLIA, A. TRIFIDA, A. PSILOSTACHYA, AND MANY MORE

Asteraceae family

CAUTION: *Some people are extremely allergic to this plant. Use with caution. Ragweed absorbs lead readily since it is a bioremediatory, so pay close attention to the areas where you are harvesting.*[1]

ORIGINS: The largest diversity of ragweeds can be found in their place of origin: southwestern North America and Mexico. They are also native to Alaska, Canada, South America, Cuba, Hispanola, and Brazil. Ragweed is now invasive or naturalized in different parts of Europe, New Zealand, India, and Africa. *Ambrosia artemisiifolia* is named after its similarities in leaf shape with the *Artemisia* genus.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Ragweeds can be quite different in terms of their leaf shape. *A. trifida* and *A. artemisiifolia* both have opposite, symmetrical, deeply lobed leaves, with *A. trifida* being simpler with a five-pointed larger leaf. *A. artemisiifolia* has more feathery leaves that somewhat resemble *Artemisia vulgaris* (mugwort). An easy way to tell them apart is by the smell. Mugwort has an earthy, perfume-like smell when crushed while ragweed's scent is neutral.

PART USED: leaves, flowers

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: drying, warming, astringent, vulnerary, bitter, antihistamine

TASTE: astringent, bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: nettle

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This plant is highly abundant in most places it grows, especially in the north and southeast of North America. Gather the leaves in the spring before flowering if intended for tincturing.

TRADITIONAL USES: Ragweed is a native plant in North America, and as such it has been used in Indigenous medicine in a variety of ways. In the

southeast, the Cherokee have used *A. artemisiifolia* as part of their Green Corn Ceremony, an important cultural event in early August that heralds the early corn harvest. It was also used historically to treat insect stings and hives. The leaf tea is used for pneumonia and for general fevers.[2] The Lakota peoples have used the leave as a poultice to soothe swellings.[3] Dakota folks have used this plant to help treat vomiting.[4]

MODERN USES: Despite being the culprit for many environmental allergies, ragweed tea can be a helpful medicine. The plant's pollen is what most often causes hay fever and other allergic reactions, so for most people, working with the leaves is not a problem. Ragweed is a gentle astringent, helpful for tonifying the mucous membrane. It is best used for the runny noses from colds and even allergies that its own pollen causes. It is a helpful antihistamine for reactions to food allergies and overactive mucous membrane secretions, as well as hives. The tea and tincture are good for diarrhea and digestive excesses.[5]

Some say that simply eating a small ragweed leaf in the spring is a good way to begin building immunity to its pollen. Ragweed can also be used as a poultice to soothe bug bites and bee stings. You can combine the leaf with plantain and violet for a warm poultice that soothes boils or splinters.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

RAGWEED TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh leaves (and flowers if desired)
1:5, 50%: dried leaves

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 1 drop if you have bad hay fever and gradually increase the dose to 20 drops four times a day to help prepare for allergy season. Also, use the tincture for colds and runny noses.

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1 Liz Neves, *Northeast Medicinal Plants: Identify, Harvest, and Use 111 Wild Herbs for Health and Wellness* (Timber Press, 2020), 289.

2 Paul B. Hamel and Mary U. Chiltoskey, *Cherokee Plants and Their Uses: A 400 Year History* (Herald Publishing, 1975), 52.

3 Dilwyn J. Rogers, *Lakota Names and Traditional Uses of Native Plants by Sicangu (Brule) People in the Rosebud Area* (Rosebud Educational Society, 1980), 35.

4 Melvin R. Gilmore, "Some Native Nebraska Plants with Their Uses by the Dakota," *Collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society* 17 (1913), 369.

5 W. Boericke, *Boericke's Materia Medica*, n.d., http://www.henriettes-herb.com/eclectic/boericke/ambrosia.html.

71. RED OAK

QUERCUS RUBRA

Fagaceae family

CAUTION: *Overconsumption can cause constipation.*

ORIGINS: Oak trees are mainly distributed throughout the Mediterranean region, including Portugal, Spain, Algeria, France, Italy, Tunisia, and Morocco, plus Asia and North America.[1]

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: The red oak is a medium-size deciduous tree with a rounded or broad spreading crown that produces branches close to the ground. It can grow 50 to 75 feet tall and often equally as wide. It has green leaves on the upper sides, while the undersides are grayish white. The leaves have 7 to 11 pointed lobes that are sharply pointed at the tips. The fall foliage is reddish brown. Small male and female flowers appear in the spring, and the fruits appear in the fall, when they produce large, rounded acorns.[2]

PART USED: bark, twigs

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: astringent, drying

TASTE: astringent

SUBSTITUTIONS: blackberry root

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Oak trees are fairly common, but please limit your harvest to windfallen branches. Use young, thin-barked twigs to avoid having to remove the hard outer bark of larger, older branches.

TRADITIONAL USES: Entire books exist to document the power and medicine of the mighty oak. White and red oaks have both been used for medicine in their natural regions. You can use them interchangeably, but red oaks are somewhat more astringent. In Southern American folk medicine, the tea of the bark was used as a tonic for liver cirrhosis, for diphtheria, and for fever. The tea was also mixed with cornmeal and applied externally for neuralgia and as a poultice for swellings.[3]

Historically, Black herbalists in the American South would sometimes mix in other herbs, like privet root and Jerusalem oak. Among the enslaved peoples in the American South, the red oak bark was generally used to treat fevers and chills, sometimes mixing it with horehound and black snakeroot in whiskey.[4]

MODERN USES: Red oak is a powerful astringent. It is a helpful mouthwash for sore, inflamed gums. Use the warm decoction for infected wounds, to get a boil to its head, or to deal with recurring skin infections. Use as a soak to soften the calluses of feet or to soak a hand, foot, or limb. Dip a clean cloth in the warmed decoction and press gently against your eye to treat a sty. The decoction is also good sipped as a warm tea for diarrhea and indigestion. Coughs benefit from the astringent powers of this bark, especially if the throat is hoarse and inflamed. The cooled bark tea or even cold tea is soothing for burns. It can also be added to a sitz bath for inflamed vaginal tissue or hemorrhoids.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

RED OAK BARK DECOCTION

2 cups shredded oak bark
2 cups water

Place the oak bark in a medium saucepan and add the water. Set over medium-low heat and bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 25 minutes.

Pour the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer and place in a glass jar.

Use as a soak for wounds, splinters, sore feet, or as a sitz bath for irritated anal or vaginal tissues.

RED OAK BARK TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh inner bark and twigs
1:4, 50%: dried inner bark and twigs

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 1 dropperful of this one to three times a day for diarrhea or indigestion, or diluted as a wound wash. It is also great to use when diluted to clean piercings.

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1 M. Taib et al., "Medicinal Uses, Phytochemistry, and Pharmacological Activities of Quercus Species," *Evidence Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine* 31 (July 2020): 1920683.

2 “*Quercus rubra*,” North Carolina Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox website, n.d., https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/quercus-rubra/.

3 D. Bown, *Encyclopaedia of Herbs and Their Uses* (Dorling Kindersley, 1995), 361–65.

4 Herbert C. Covey, *African American Slave Medicine: Herbal and Non-Herbal Treatments* (Lexington Books, 2008).

72. ROSE

ROSA DAMASCENA, R. CANINA, R. RUGOSA, R. GALLICA

Rosaceae family

CAUTION: *Using rose petals and rose hips as a tea or syrup is considered generally safe for most people. The little hairs on rose hips can sometimes be irritating to the throat, so make sure to strain the tea well.*

ORIGINS: There are roughly 300 species in the *Rosa* genus. Traces of early roses have been found in the ancient fossil records of Asia, Europe, and western parts of North America. While the fragrant roses of today are largely bred from original Asian species, chiefly eighteenth-century Chinese roses, there are also native species hailing from northwestern Africa, Europe, and North America.[1]

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Roses are perennial, thorned shrubby plants with cabbage-like ruffled, circular flowers of pink to red soft petals. The leaves are divided and toothed around the edges, ranging in size depending on the species. Roses are fragrant when blooming, with their distinctive aroma.

PART USED: flowers, fruit (rose hips), leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: antidepressant, antispasmodic, aphrodisiac, astringent, nervine, digestive stimulant, cleansing, expectorant, antibacterial, tonic, anti-inflammatory

TASTE: **s**weet, floral

SUBSTITUTIONS: tulsi

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Harvest the petals in the morning when they are the most fragrant, before the sun gets very hot.

TRADITIONAL USES: Wild roses are used in every culture in which they bloom. In North America, rose hips and young shoots have been used as both food and astringent medicine. In ancient Rome, they were a symbol of the goddess Venus and were celebrated for their perfume and culinary uses. Roses were also used for their skin healing properties and as a vulnerary, or wound

healer. The legendary herbalist and visionary healer Hildegard von Bingen, a twelfth-century German abbess, used roses for eye troubles, a use that would continue to be popular throughout the rest of the Middle Ages and into the European Renaissance.[2]

In Chinese medicine and in Ayurveda, roses are used as medicine for all aspects of fertility. They have been used for libido issues for both genders, and have also been used as a regulator of menses and an aid in semen production.[3] In Ayurveda, rose is referred to as *medhya*, which means it has the ability to improve the intellect, as well as provide nourishment to anxiety and the nerves.[4]

MODERN USES: Rose hips (*R. canina*) are a great source of vitamin C and can be used as a syrup or a beautiful pink tea. They are nourishing and nutritionally powerful, rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals. A tincture or tea of rose hips can be taken as an astringent for diarrhea or colic, and it makes a great addition to cough remedies, especially if you are phlegmy. Topically, rosewater, a by-product of the essential oil trade, or rose petal tea can be used to soothe dry or inflamed skin. Rose tea makes a gentle soak for irritated vaginal skin and is helpful for painful hemorrhoids with its mild astringency. This also makes rose tea an effective remedy for sore throats.

R. rugosa flowers are helpful for heavy, painful menstruation when made into a tea with plants like motherwort and partridge berry. Rose petal–infused honey stirred into many types of warm tea is comforting. Try tulsi, linden, oats, and rose together for a nourishing nervine to help calm a fretful heart. Adding shepherd's purse to a tea or tincture with these other herbs is also helpful for menstrual irregularity and amenorrhea. Rose petal vinegar makes a great anti-itch spray and can be diluted with witch hazel or water to be sprayed on itchy bug bites and the "summer legs" many of us get from the bugs, thorns, and scrapes. All rose species offer gentle sedative and calming medicine as a tea, honey, or tincture.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

ROSE PETAL–INFUSED HONEY

2 tablespoons dried rose petals
1 cup honey

Place the rose petals in a glass jar and cover with the honey. Stir with a wooden spoon, then add the lid and allow the rose petals to infuse the honey for 1 to 2 weeks. You can leave the rose petals in the honey; it should last about 1 year in a cool, dark place.

Add the honey by the spoonful to tea or use for skin care or as a wound-healing topical.

ROSE PETAL ELIXIR

A sweet way to gladden the heart.

2 cups fresh rose flower petals or buds
Roughly 2 cups raw honey
Roughly 2 cups brandy (at least 80 proof)

Place the rose petals in a 1-quart glass jar and pack them down gently. Pour the honey and brandy over the flowers and stir well. Lid the jar and allow to sit 1 month in a cool, dark place.

Strain out the flowers and store this in a clean jar with a lid in a cool dark place up to 1 year.

Take ½ teaspoon, as desired, in warm linden or tulsi tea to calm the nerves or just for the simple pleasure of it.

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1 Jiongrui Tan et al., "Genetic Relationships and Evolution of Old Chinese Garden Roses Based on SSRs and Chromosome Diversity," *Scientific Reports* 7, no. 1 (2017): 15437.

2 J. Parkinson, *Theatrum botanicum: The Theater of Plants or, An Herbal of Large Extent* (Cotes, 1640).

3 Peter Holmes, *The Energetics of Western Herbs: A Materia Medica Integrating Western and Chinese Herbal Therapeutics*, vol. 1 (Snow Lotus Press, 2007).

4 S. Pole, *Ayurvedic Medicine* (Singing Dragon, 2012).

73. ROSEMARY

SALVIA ROSMARINUS

Lamiaceae family

CAUTION: *Large doses of rosemary should be avoided during pregnancy. High doses of rosemary medicines can irritate those with Crohn's, IBS, or ulcerative colitis over long periods of time. Rosemary can have some effect on blood glucose, so avoid high doses of the tincture if you have diabetes or if you're on blood thinners.*[1]

ORIGINS: Rosemary is native to southern Europe, particularly the Mediterranean region, and Asia.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Rosemary is a woody perennial shrub that has many branches of narrow, almost pine needle–like short leaves, which emit a strong herbal odor when crushed.

PART USED: leaves (needles)

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: astringent, nervine, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, tonic, stimulating, mild analgesic

TASTE: pungent, aromatic, bitter, piney

SUBSTITUTIONS: thyme, sage

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Rosemary can be somewhat easy to cultivate in a home garden. It is often killed by hard frosts and does best grown near a stone wall or house to help retain heat and keep it warm during colder months. Snip off the tips to encourage new growth rather than breaking the woody branches until too short and thus unintentionally pruning the bush.

TRADITIONAL USES: In ancient Greece and Rome, rosemary was used for remembrance. A decoration at both weddings and funerals, it was touted for its effects on memory. Rosemary was also burned as incense, often along with juniper in sick rooms, a tactic preserved in the old French name for the herb, *incensier*.[2] Rosemary is also part of traditional Persian medicine, with its many uses, including oil for preventing hair loss, nourishing hair growth, treating

sciatica and joint pains, rheumatoid arthritis (topically), and as a general anti-inflammatory.[3] In Mexican folk medicine, rosemary has been used as a bath to treat vaginal infections post birth.[4]

MODERN USES: Rosemary is a popular herb, for good reason. It is helpful as a tea or tincture and when infused in oil and vinegar. Rosemary tea can be used to relieve tension headaches. It is bitter and pungent, which makes the tea a useful digestive. It is also helpful for gastric distress, gas, indigestion, and as an aperitif to stimulate digestion. This same tea is helpful as a hair rinse to promote hair growth and make dark hair shine; try massaging the infused oil or tea into the scalp to promote good circulation. The tincture can be used much the same way. Rosemary's fragrant volatile oils are antiseptic, which makes the hot tea useful for colds and flu, as well for wounds and infections of the skin, applied topically. An herbal steam made from sage and rosemary is excellent for stuffy noses.

The infused oil is warming and enlivening, so it can be rubbed on rheumatic joints as a mild pain reliever. Its scent alone is stimulating, said to help with concentration. A compress of the warm tea is comforting on sprains and soft-tissue injuries. Add rosemary to any antiseptic tincture blend along with Oregon grape root or echinacea when dealing with internal infections like urinary tract infections, colds, or food poisoning. Add the diluted tincture to mouthwashes and as oral rinses for gum infections and mouth sores. It's also great for bad breath in general!

Rosemary is rich in antioxidants, and there is evidence it can help with memory issues, concentration, and brain fog.[5] Try combining it with gotu kola and hawthorn or motherwort for circulation and brain health. Try cooking with it or adding it to infused vinegars and making medicinal salad dressings to bring its delicious healing into your life more often.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

ROSEMARY TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh leaves

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 10 to 50 drops three times a day.

ROSEMARY, ORANGE PEEL, AND HAWTHORN BERRY ANTIOXIDANT SYRUP

½ cup dried hawthorn berries or 1 cup fresh berries
2 large rosemary sprigs
Slices of 1 orange peel (from organic orange)
3 cups water
1 cup honey

Place the hawthorn berries, rosemary, and orange peel in a medium saucepan. Add the water and place over medium-low heat. Bring to a boil and then reduce the heat to low and simmer for 30 minutes. The liquid should reduce to about 1 cup. While still warm add the honey. Turn on the heat again, on low, to warm the syrup enough to mix well with a wooden spoon. Pour the liquid through a strainer into a glass jar, cover with the lid, and store in the fridge for up to 1 month.

Spoon this syrup over yogurt, cereal, oatmeal, or even ice cream for an antioxidant-rich treat. You can also add this to sparkling water for a delicious drink.

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1 "Complementary and Alternative Medicine, Rosemary," January 1, 2017, St. Lukes Hospital website, www.stlukes-stl.com/health-content/medicine/33/000271.htm.

2 Madame Grieve, *A Modern Herbal: Complete Volume* (Stone Basin Books, 1992), 683.

3 Peyman Mikaili et al., "Pharmacological Properties of Herbal Oil Extracts Used in Iranian Traditional Medicine," *Advances in Environmental Biology* 6, no. 1 (2012): 153–58.

4 L. Cervantes and Javier Valdés Gutiérrez, "Plantas medicinales del distrito de Ocotlán Oaxaca," *Anales del Instituto de Biología. Serie Botánica* 60, no. 1 (1990): 85–103.

5 M. Ghasemzadeh Rahbardar and H. Hosseinzadeh, "Therapeutic Effects of Rosemary (Rosmarinus officinalis L.) and Its Active Constituents on Nervous System Disorders," *Iranian Journal of Basic Medical Science* 23, no. 9 (2020): 1100–12.

74. SAGE, COMMON SAGE

SALVIA OFFICINALIS

Lamiaceae family

CAUTION: *In culinary doses, none known. Use caution in high doses with those with diabetes and blood sugar issues, as well as with epilepsy. Do not use during lactation, as it can cause a lessening of milk production.*

ORIGINS: The sage genus name is from the Latin *salvere,* which means "to be well or in good health." Common sage originated in the regions now known as Bosnia and Albania.[1] It now grows plentifully around the world.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Sage is a bushy, woody herbaceous perennial plant with long, elliptical leaves that can remain evergreen in warmer climates. The leaves are whitish green, softly fuzzy, textured, and strongly aromatic. They, like other mints, have square stems and alternating opposite leaves.

PART USED: flowers, leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: astringent, warming, stimulating, antiseptic, nervine, digestive, anti-inflammatory, drying, diaphoretic

TASTE: pungent

SUBSTITUTIONS: rosemary

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Sage flowers in the summer; its flowers are often harvested for medicine, but you can also harvest its leaves, much like other mints by cutting or pinching the tip of the plant down to a node to make sure the growth continues. Common sage is easy to grow in many areas in North America as a perennial garden herb.

TRADITIONAL USES: Sage is best known today as a culinary spice, but kitchen table medicine is still a powerful system of healing. The herbs used in cooking aren't just because they taste good; they were originally added for their observed effects in preventing spoilage, enhancing the digestion of fatty meats, and even in

preventing flatulence. Sage does all of this and more, and it is a common ingredient in pork sausage for this very reason.

In India, sage has been traditionally used to treat gas, upset stomach, and infections of the mouth, nose, and throat. It was used in English folk medicine for coughs, hoarseness, and memory, as well as for wounds.[2] In Appalachian folk medicine, sage has been a great remedy for both problems of the nervous system and coughs and colds. Medicines like catnip, sage, and peppermint *(Mentha* spp.) were considered nervines owing to nineteenth-century ideas about the stomach connections with nerve disorders. Legendary Alabama herbalist Tommie Bass recommended a tonic to calm the nerves that contained maypop (*Passiflora incarnata*), sage (*Salvia officinalis)*, peppermint (*Mentha x piperita.*), skullcap (*Scutellaria* spp.), and peach leaves (*Prunus persica*).[3]

MODERN USES: Sage is great as a tea for fevers, colds, and sore throats; additionally, warm sage tea can be used as a sore throat gargle. It also makes a great steam inhalation for phlegm and catarrh. It is helpful for any inflammation of the gums or throat associated with different infections; simply swish around the mouth for the sores caused by dentures or slight infections caused by dental work. Sage can also be used to alleviate menopausal sweating and general excessive sweating, especially when served as a cold tea.

The tincture is easy to make and excellent for infections in general. Many of the aromatic herbs, like sage, rosemary, and oregano, that we think of as "kitchen" herbs are strongly antiseptic, and their tinctures can be diluted with water (alcohol stings!) and used as wound washes, applied to wounds caused by splinters and other little ouches likely to get infected. Add a few drops of sage tincture to a clean squeeze bottle of saline wash for easy use.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

SAGE SALT

2 cups finely chopped fresh sage
½ cup coarse sea salt

Sprinkle a thin, even layer of salt into the bottom of a 1-pint wide-mouth glass canning jar, then sprinkle in a thin layer of sage. Continue in layers as you fill the jar. Cover the jar and

allow to infuse for 2 weeks, although the herbs can stay in the salt indefinitely.

Sprinkle this herbed salt over meat, mushrooms, tempeh, or other favorite foods.

SAGE TEA

1 tablespoon chopped fresh sage
1 cup freshly boiled water
Honey (optional)

Place the sage in a glass jar and pour the hot water over the herb. Cover and steep for 20 minutes, strain, and add honey, if desired. It's especially nice to add honey with a sore throat.

Take up to 6 cups a day.

SAGE FLOWER OXYMEL

You can stir this oxymel into a warm tea of other herbs, as well as into seltzer to create a mocktail. Additionally, you can use it to marinate chicken or mushrooms, or as a salad dressing!

1 ½ cups finely chopped fresh sage flowers
2 cups organic apple cider vinegar (or other vinegar with at least 5% acidity)
2 cups raw honey

Pour it through a strainer into a large measuring cup with a spout. Rinse the jar, then pour the oxymel back into the jar. Cover and store at room temperature for from 6 months to 1 year.

Take 1 teaspoon for coughs up to six times a day. Make sure to rinse you mouth and swish with clear water to prevent the vinegar from damaging your teeth.

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1 M. Blumenthal et al., eds., *Herbal Medicine: Expanded Commission E Monographs* (American Botanical Council and Integrative Medicine Communications, 2000).

2 M. Woodward, ed., *Gerard's Herbal: The History of Plants* (Senate, 1994).

3 J. K. Crellin, *Trying to Give Ease: Tommie Bass and the Story of Herbal Medicine* (Duke University Press, 1997). 166.

75. SASSAFRAS

SASSAFRAS ALBIDUM

Lauraceae family

CAUTION: *Sassafras contains safrole, a compound found in many other commonly used herbs like basil ginger and nutmeg, and for which there is concern as a potential human carcinogen. Studies were performed in which rats were given high doses intravenously of pure safrole for many days; while this indeed caused cancer in the rats harmed by this study, this did not prove that traditionally prepared teas have the same effect on humans. As such, sassafras is an herb that can be safely enjoyed in small, infrequent doses as a tea—as it has been for thousands of years by Indigenous herbalists.*[1] *However, avoid prolonged use and avoid during pregnancy and lactation.*

ORIGINS: Sassafras is native to eastern Asia and eastern North American deciduous woodlands.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Sassafras is a tree, often shrubby and small when young, easily identified by its unique leaf shapes; though often encountered as a small, young tree, it can grow up to 80 feet in height. Sassafras is often found on the edges of fields. Sassafras has what is botanically known as *heterophylly*, or multiple leaf shapes on one plant. It has the single lobe, the two lobbed "mittens" (both left and right!), and the three-lobed "dinosaur" foot shape. The tree is easily confused with mulberry in North America. The young bark is green and eventually turns brown, and it emits a fantastic fruity scent that resembles a spiced apple.

PART USED: bark, root, leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: warming, mucilaginous, soothing, demulcent, tonic, alterative

TASTE: sweet

SUBSTITUTIONS: spicebush

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: In areas where there are healthy populations, harvest the young sprouts that grow around larger trees. There is a sassafras blight that kills these beautiful trees, so extra caution should be taken to monitor populations in the coming years. These trees can be found growing in old farm fields and along country road edges. Trim sparingly a few leaves and twigs off larger trees to make tea.

TRADITIONAL USES: Sassafras has a long history of use in Indigenous medicine traditions. It was called *winauk* by Delaware and Virginia Indigenous folks, and *pauane* by the Timucua. First Nations Peoples distinguished between white sassafras and red sassafras, each different parts of the same plant, with distinct colors and uses.[2] Sassafras root decoction and tea were drunk throughout the southeast as a tonic to purify the blood, expel worms, and treat rheumatism and measles. The Cherokee, Choctaw, Catawba, Houma, Mohegan, and other nations used this plant's fragrant roots for a variety of medicines focused on reducing fever, purifying the blood, and removing pain from the body.[3]

Sassafras was one of the first plants exported in bulk to Europe from the New World. It became known as a panacea and was often enjoyed as a social beverage when mixed with milk and sugar in European coffeehouses. Indeed, it was even thought to cure syphilis and was second only to mercury in its application, until it was decided that it did little to stop the "social disease" of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Unfortunately, this made sassafras one of the first overharvested plants in North America, done by European colonists.[4]

In Black folk tradition in the southeastern United States, the leaf has been an important part of food culture and is the thickening agent in filé powder. The leaves were also a medicine for colds and flu when made into a tea, especially for its throat soothing mucilage. The roots were also an important part of Black American folk medicine, used as a tea to treat measles. They were also used to address blindness.[5]

MODERN USES: The root makes a wonderful tea for revitalizing the body and can be made into a spring tonic to reinvigorate the body after a long winter. Use

the leaf tea for inflamed sore throats because of its mucilaginous, soothing compounds. Like okra, the leaf makes the water it is steeped in gooey and almost slimy to the touch. While some might find this texture unpleasant, the substance is soothing and cooling. The cooled, demulcent leaf tea can be dabbed onto sore or inflamed eyes. It can also be useful for bowel issues and stomach soothing. Tea can also be made from the twigs and small branches by gently simmering them for 20 minutes and straining. The tea is helpful for fevers with chills along with use of other herbs like yarrow and elderflower.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

SASSAFRAS LEAF TEA

Use sassafras tea for its warming and blood-moving properties in conjunction with other plants like burdock for skin issues, or spicebush and black birch as blood tonic. You can also drink this just for pleasure!

1 cup chopped fresh sassafras leaves
About 2 cups freshly boiled water
Honey (optional)

Place the sassafras leaves in a glass jar. Add the hot water, cover, and steep for 20 minutes. Pour through a fine-mesh strainer. Taste and sweeten with honey, if desired. Drink 1 cup for a sore throat one or two times a day or sip throughout the day to soothe inflamed tissues.

SASSAFRAS ROOT BEER (NONALCOHOLIC)

This is a spectacular beverage for those who abstain from alcohol. It is a way to enjoy the magic of fermentation and probiotics as well as the blood tonic nature of this special tree.

1 cup chopped fresh sassafras root
4 cups water
2 cups honey
7 dandelion blossoms

Place the sassafras root in a medium saucepan and add the water. Cover and set over medium-low heat. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low, and simmer for 30 minutes. Allow it to steep another 20 minutes while it cools and is no longer too hot to touch. Pour the cooled tea through a strainer into a 1-quart glass jar. Stir in the honey and carefully drop in the dandelion blossoms. Stir briefly and then close loosely with the lid. You can also cover the jar with a cloth and a rubber band.

Place the jar on a plate or in a bowl to catch any liquid that may arise—the fermentation happens a little faster than you would think and some can escape the jar. Place the jar in a spot out of direct light and with good airflow. Let it ferment for 3 to 5 days, occasionally "burping" the lid to allow the CO_2 to escape. (You can also use a jar airlock that allows gas

out but prevents air from getting in.) When you see bubbles, you know it's active! Taste with a clean spoon each time to avoid introducing bacteria.

Strain out the blossoms and pour the root beer into a pretty bottle (or rinse the jar and reuse), then store the root beer in the fridge for up to 2 months.

Enjoy the root beer by the glassful or add seltzer to cut the sweetness.

Caution: *You should not drink if you are pregnant or nursing.*

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1 Kate Cummings, "Sassafras Tea: Using a Traditional Method of Preparation to Reduce the Carcinogenic Compound Safrole" (PhD diss., Clemson University, 2012).

2 Daniel F. Austin and P. Narodny Honychurch, *Florida Ethnobotany* (CRC Press, 2004).

3 Paul B. Hamel and Mary U. Chiltoskey, *Cherokee Plants and Their Uses: A 400 Year History* (Herald Publishing, 1975), 54.

4 Phyllis D. Light, *Southern Folk Medicine: Healing Traditions from the Appalachian Fields and Forests* (North Atlantic Books, 2018), 66.

5 Faith Mitchell, *Hoodoo Medicine: Gullah Herbal Remedies* (Summerhouse Press, 1998), 91.

76. SELF HEAL, HEAL ALL, CARPENTER'S HERB

PRUNELLA VULGARIS

Lamiaceae family

CAUTION: *None noted. Best to heed mindfulness when using mint family plants during pregnancy.*

ORIGINS: There are 15 members in the genus *Prunella*. They grow widely in the tropical and temperate regions of Europe, North America, Africa, and Asia. Self heal is now naturalized around the world, but is considered invasive in the Pacific Islands, Australia, Hawaii, and New Zealand. As is sometimes the case, there are various theories about the origins of this plant. Some sources say it is native to Europe and Asia, while others say it is native to the Americas.[1]

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Self heal is a low-growing mint family plant with square stems and opposite leaves and is topped with column-like, deep-purple, lipped flowers.

PART USED: flowering tops, leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: cooling, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, astringent, antiseptic

TASTE: bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: lemon balm

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Self heal is an abundant plant, growing commonly in lawns and in wayward spaces. It begins flowering in temperate climates around late summer and then continues until early fall. In Chinese medicine, it is harvested once the leaves wilt, while in Western herbalism, it is harvested while flowering.[2]

TRADITIONAL USES: Self heal is a very important plant with thousands of years of history in China, Korea, and Japan for use in medicine. Traditional Chinese medicine holds that *P. vulgaris* tastes bitter and acrid and is cold in nature, so is used for fevers and in eyesight improvement, as well as to help

swelling and lump dissipation.[3] Self heal is called *xia ku cao* in Chinese, meaning "grass that withers in summer."[4]

It was also used historically all over Europe for medicine. In Ireland, it was one of the most prized medicinal herbs, useful for respiratory issues, to staunch bleeding, and for heart trouble.[5] It was used in traditional English folk medicine for wound healing and to help particularly infected wounds, or "green" wounds. One of its popular names, "carpenter's herb," indicates that it was traditionally used for many a mashed, bruised, or cut finger.[6]

MODERN USES: Self heal is an exceptional wound healer. The tea made from the flowers and leaves is great for infections of the eyes and can be used as a compress for conjunctivitis and sties. It is also helpful to the mouth and gums, specifically to heal inflamed, bleeding gums. It has long been used for this purpose by country folks all over Europe—you can chew the leaves and flowers and hold them in the mouth against the gums for this purpose.[7]

The plant is gently astringent and has a long history of use in treating edema and lower body lymph issues. Self heal is also strongly antiviral. Many humans have herpes simplex viruses and HPV, both of which self heal offers strong actions against. Self heal contains more of the powerful healing compound rosmarinic acid—more than rosemary itself. When blended with nettle and goldenrod, self heal helps soothe allergies; it supports immune function as a tincture, tea, or vinegar.

In traditional Chinese medicine, self heal continues to be used today to clear heat—in other words, to calm inflammation. It is often used to treat accumulations like lipomas, cancer formulas with tumors, swollen glands, and goiters.[8] It's not a surprise that with so many healing properties, this plant earned the name "heal all," or self heal!

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

SELF HEAL FRESH POULTICE

Harvest the entire aboveground portion of the plant—the leaves and flowering tops. Either soak the chopped parts in hot water and then chop finely and crush, or chop and place in a

blender (in portions), then process for a quick mash. Apply the mash to where the body has swellings, nonpuncture wounds, and other skin issues. Wrap in a clean towel and leave on for 4 to 6 hours, then gently clean off the plant matter and leave it outside or compost it.

SELF HEAL TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh flowering tops

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 1 to 3 droppersful 3 to 4 times a day or use diluted in a little water as a mouthwash.

SELF HEAL HONEY OINTMENT

QUICK METHOD

1 cup finely chopped dried self heal flowers and leaves
About 2 cups raw honey or manuka honey

Warm the self heal in a jar with the honey in a double boiler. Heat gently for 3 to 6 hours without boiling it.

COLD INFUSION METHOD

1 cup chopped dried self heal
About 2 cups raw honey or manuka honey

Place the self heal in a glass jar and add the honey, stirring briefly with a wooden spoon. Lid and allow to infuse for 2 weeks in a cool, dark spot.

When you're ready to strain, place the jar in a sunny window to warm the honey for a couple of hours. Pour the honey through a strainer into a clean jar. Label, lid, and store indefinitely.

Apply this honey with a clean Q-tip to wounds as a dressing and cover with a bandage. It's great for splinters! This honey is also helpful for herpes sores; wash and apply a thin coating.

Caution: *Do not apply to puncture wounds.*

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1 "*Prunella vulgaris* (self-heal)," CABI Digital Library, November 19, 2019, https://www.cabidigitallibrary.org/doi/10.1079/cabicompendium.116556.

2 CoreyPine Shane, *Southeast Medicinal Plants* (Timber Press, 2021), 213.

3 *Pharmacopoeia of the People's Republic of China* (Chinese Pharmacopoeia, 2010).

4 Yubing Bai et al., "Phytochemistry and Pharmacological Activities of the Genus Prunella," *Food Chemistry* 204 (2016): 483–96.

5 D. E. Allen. and G. Hatfield, *Medicinal Plants in Folk Tradition: An Ethnobotany of Britain & Ireland* (Timber Press, 2004), 221.

6 Nicholas Culpeper, *Culpeper's English Physician: and Complete Herbal* (H. Richardson, 1801).

7 Bill Church, Medicinal Plants, Trees, & Shrubs of Appalachia (Pub City TK: Tate Publishing & Enterprises, 2013), 65.

8 CoreyPine Shane, *Southeast Medicinal Plants* (Timber Press, 2021), 214.

77. SHEPHERD'S PURSE, ST. JAMES WEED, POVERTY WEED

CAPSELLA BURSA-PASTORIS

Brassicaceae family

CAUTION: *Not to be used during pregnancy, except for during labor. Large doses over a long time can cause heart palpitations.*

ORIGINS: Shepherd's purse is a common weed throughout North America. It is native to Asia and the North Atlantic Islands and eastern Europe. It has been used by humans for thousands of years, and its seeds have even been found in the ancient Neolithic proto-city Çatalhöyük, in Turkey, dating back to 7500 BCE. It is named after its seed pods, which resemble the leather pouches once carried by shepherds.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Shepherd's purse is a small mustard family plant with lobed leaves that grow in a rosette. It has distinctive seed pods that resemble little hearts.

PART USED: flowers, leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: astringent, anti-inflammatory, circulatory stimulant, styptic, urinary antiseptic, vulnerary

TASTE: sour, salty

SUBSTITUTIONS: yarrow

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Leaves can be gathered fresh most of the year and used in salads. Shepherd's purse is easy to gather in large amounts in the wild in North America, where it is considered a weed. In its native ranges, use mindfulness when harvesting.

TRADITIONAL USES: Shepherd's purse was brought to North America by European colonists, where it was eaten as well as grown for medicine. The aerial parts of the plant were used to stop internal and external bleeding, particularly for blood in the urine and nosebleeds. It was also specifically used for head wounds and in traditional European medicine for infected wounds as a poultice. In English folk medicine, it was bound to the wrists and soles of the feet to help

with jaundice, as well as made into poultices to help with inflammation and St. Anthony's fire. The juice dropped into the ears was said to cure tinnitus. It was also used topically as an ointment for head wounds.[1]

In Russian folk medicine, shepherd's purse has been used for everything from diarrhea and gastritis to gallbladder and liver issues, bladder, and lung ailments. It also has a long history of use in midwifery to stimulate the uterus during labor, to aid in contractions, and to expel the placenta.[2] It was one of the first herbs in herbal medicine that was used for uterine hemorrhaging.

MODERN USES: The tea and tincture of shepherd's purse can be used to regulate the menses and are also useful as a styptic to help stop bleeding. The tincture is especially helpful for heavy menstrual bleeding. It is also used to stem nosebleeds; one dips a Q-tip in the tincture and gently presses it not too far into the nostril.

Shepherd's purse really excels at tightening loose and irritated tissues. Its astringency makes it useful for treating weaknesses in the uterus and pelvic floor, where incontinence and bladder weakness are present. It is also useful for diarrhea. A warmed poultice of shepherd's purse is soothing for nursing mothers dealing with enlarged and painful breasts and nipple tissue. It is helpful in formulas for fevers that are long lasting. The tincture can treat the painful condition caused by a buildup of uric acid, known as gout, as it helps rid the body of that uric acid through the kidneys.[3] Try pairing the tincture with cleavers and dandelion leaf tea to get some relief from this painful condition.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

SHEPHERD'S PURSE TINCTURE

The whole plant is tinctured when flowering. It is said to be less hemostatic when the herb is dried.

1:2, 60%: fresh whole plant (roots and all)

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 20 to 60 drops three times a day for heavy menstrual bleeding, cystitis, weakness of the esophageal sphincter, and diarrhea.

SHEPHERD'S PURSE TEA

This tea can help with heavy menstrual bleeding, cystitis, and diarrhea. Sipping a hot infusion during labor can stimulate contractions and ease postpartum bleeding. For better results, make a double infusion by making shepherd's purse tea and then warming the tea and steeping more fresh herbs in that tea!
Take one teaspoon of dried shepherd's purse aerial parts and steep covered in 1 cup of freshly boiled water for 30 minutes. Strain and then warm it up again. Add another teaspoon of the herb and steep again for 30 minutes to make a double infusion!

SHEPHERD'S PURSE COMPRESS

2 tablespoons chopped fresh shepherd's purse aerial parts
1 cup freshly boiled water

Place the shepherd's purse in a glass jar and pour in the hot water. Let steep for 20 minutes covered. Strain and dip a cotton pad or washcloth in the infusion and use immediately on wounds to staunch any bleeding.

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1 Nicholas Culpeper, *Culpeper's Complete Herbal* (Joseph Smith, 1841), 270.

2 Nazim Mamedov et al., "Medicinal Plants Used in Traditional Medicine of the Caucasus and North America," *Journal of Medicinally Active Plants* 4, no. 3 (2015): 42–66.

3 CoreyPine Shane, *Southeast Medicinal Plants* (Timber Press, 2021), 216.

78. SPICEBUSH, BENJAMIN BUSH, FEVERBUSH

LINDERA BENZOIN

Lauraceae family

CAUTION: *None known, but use caution during pregnancy and while breastfeeding, owing to its historical uses as an abortifacient.*

ORIGINS: Spicebush is native to North America, ranging from southern Ontario down to Maine, and from southern Michigan into Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. There are about 100 species in eastern Asia, where most of the *Lindera* genus originated.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: White bumps cover this gray, shrubby, many-trunked little tree. It has simple light green, tender leaves that have a slight gold shimmer to them in the spring. In the fall, it grows berries that are a deep blood red and are shiny with a large black seed in the middle, much like a little avocado (which they are related to).

PART USED: berries, twigs, bark, leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: diaphoretic, febrifuge, tonic, antifungal

TASTE: warming, fragrant, sweet

SUBSTITUTIONS: sassafras

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Spicebush can be abundant in certain forest understories, and cutting a few twigs here and there is the best way to avoid damaging the bush. Its berries are loved by birds, and the bush often fruits plentifully, making it appropriate to harvest only a few handfuls from larger shrubs.

TRADITIONAL USES: In Indigenous medicinal practices in the United States, this native shrub was consumed as a decoction made from twigs and bark and was said to help bring on a sweat, as well as to treat rheumatic pains, anemia, colds, and more. For example, Creek folks added willow bark to spicebush tea for help with rheumatic pains, while Ojibwa peoples used it as a general tonic to

help when one feels run down.[1] Spicebush berries were also consumed as a tea by Indigenous people to bring on delayed menses, cramps, and measles.

European settlers and enslaved African people in the southeastern United States adopted many of these uses and used spicebush tea to treat worms, typhoid, and fevers in general. The folk name "fever bush" really describes this plant's use in traditional medicine. Europeans settlers seemed more interested in using the berries as a spice at first, rather than utilizing the medicine of this beautiful shrub. Spicebush berries were eventually used by these settlers for colic and digestive issues.[2] The bark and twigs were also decocted as part of the spring tonics of Appalachian and Ozark Mountain folk medicine tradition. In these tonics, certain fragrant bitter or strong-tasting herbs like spicebush, sassafras, and dandelion were simmered and drunk generally nine times in the spring to "purify the blood" or to move the blood after a long winter of eating little fresh food and lots of salted meat.

MODERN USES: A spicebush twig decoction is a great wash for vaginal itching, candida, and other yeast infections owing to its volatile oil content. The leaves make a pleasant-tasting tea, but the berries and twigs are preferred for medicinal uses because of their higher medicinal content. A tincture made from the berries or a decoction made from the inner bark and twigs is helpful as a diaphoretic for fever.

The berries also add a warm spicy flavor to herbal chai teas, enjoyed when one has a cold or flu. Just be sure to dry the berries well, as they have a high oil content and can mold easily. There are effectively two flavored spices one can make from the berries when the fruit is separated from the seed. The seeds can be easily squeezed out of the thin fleshed fruits with your fingers. The fruits and seeds can both be dehydrated using a dehydrator. You can grate the fruits for a masala-like spice, while the seeds have a taste resembling black pepper.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

SPICEBUSH-INFUSED HONEY

This is often called "fever honey."

2 tablespoons dried, crushed spicebush berries
2 cups raw honey

Gently crush the berries with a mortar and pestle. Place them in a pint jar into a double boiler and pour in the honey, stirring to cover the berries completely. Loosely cover the jar, and put some water in the bottom pot of the double boiler and place it over medium-low heat to gently warm and infuse the honey for 30 minutes. Turn off the heat and leave the jar to infuse further as it cools. You can let this steep for another 2 weeks for a stronger flavor or go ahead and strain out the berries before the honey completely cools. Label and store this jar in a cool, dark place indefinitely.

Use 2 tablespoons of this honey in a tea of any combination of herbs, like bee balm, boneset, mint, or yarrow, for colds and flu, or just for pleasure. Or spoon into a cup of birch tea or pine needle tea for a delicious taste of the woods.

SPICEBUSH TINCTURE

1:5, 80%: fresh berries
1:2, 95%: fresh bark and twigs

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 1 to 3 dropperfuls a day for fevers and chills. A twig or bark tincture is best for candida overgrowth.; take 1 dropperful a day for 2 weeks along with lowering your intake of sugar.

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1 James A. Duke, *Handbook of Northeastern Indian Medicinal Plants* (Quarterman Publications, 1986).

2 Steven Foster and James A. Duke, *A Field Guide to Medicinal Plants and Herbs of Eastern and Central North America*, 2nd ed. (Houghton Mifflin, 2000).

79. ST. JOHN'S WORT

HYPERICUM PERFORATUM

Hypericaceae family

CAUTION: *This plant unfortunately has many drug interactions. Please do not ingest if on birth control or other medications. Photosensitivity can also occur with this plant. Use with caution.*

ORIGINS: This plant most likely originated in Siberia but now grows in temperate climates around the world. Some species are native to North Africa and Eurasia.

PART USED: flowering tops

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: anti-inflammatory, diuretic, anti-viral, vulnerary, anxiolytic, nervine, relaxant, digestive, hepatic, alterative, anodyne

TASTE: bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: tulsi, mimosa

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Please harvest wisely; the populations of this plant can vary widely and it takes attention to not overharvest this often native plant. I recommend only harvesting from places you have been very familiar with over multiple seasons, or grow the herb in a garden or pot.

TRADITIONAL USES: The botanical name of the genus sheds light on some of the importance this herb held in ancient history. It was known as a *fuga daemonum*, or devil chaser, in old Italy. The Latin *hypericum* comes from the

Greek *hyper eikon*; some historians interpret this as "over an apparition," in reference to the plant's use against supernatural agents. The sunny yellow flowers have long been associated with the summer solstice and lifting dark spirits, or a sanguine constitution. It was also used as a diuretic as a tea of the flowering tops. In medieval Germany, it was used to staunch bleeding wounds and even to heal the site of injury from poisoned arrows.

MODERN USES: St. John's wort is a powerful plant. Its actions on the liver mean you must be careful about other medications and herbs that are taken alongside it. This plant has antiviral properties that make it helpful as a tincture for herpes and other enveloped viruses. It is also helpful in what are generally called nervous conditions. While St. John's wort can be touted as a general antidepressant, it is often not powerful enough to treat clinical depression, and care should be taken in recommending it over medications and therapy. Plants are extremely powerful, but they are not a replacement for mental health care.

St. John's wort supports vitality and is helpful during menopause. It can also be a powerful helper for others in different life transitions, especially when the spirits are low. I like to imagine the powerful midsummer sun represented by the cheerful yellow flowers in every bottle of the beautiful red-colored tincture. The use of St. John's wort externally is helpful for things like nerve pain and sciatica. Infuse olive oil with the wilted but still fresh plant to create a ruby-red pain oil. This is not intended to be ingested, but purely applied topically.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS:

*S*T. JOHN'*S* WORT OIL

This oil is wonderful when rubbed onto painful joints or muscles. When making oils, dried herbs are almost always used to help prevent spoilage. The exception to this rule, however, is St. John's wort.

Caution: *It can cause photodermatitis for some people, so try not to get too much sun after applying.*

1 clean glass jar
Enough St. John's wort to fill the jar, crushed
Enough olive oil to fill the jar

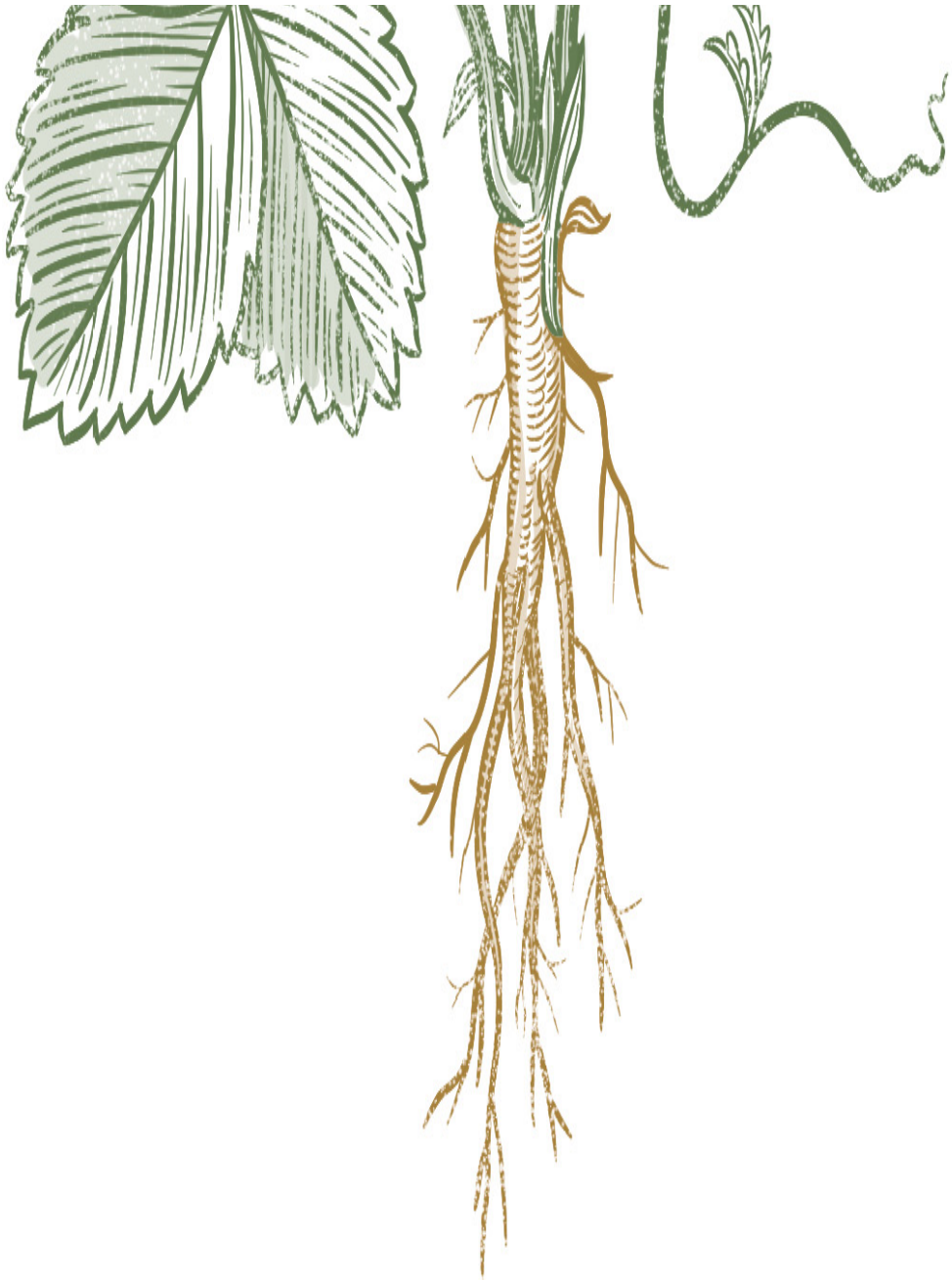
Harvest your St. John's wort from a field or garden and allow it to wilt overnight. I place mine on some clean towels in an out of the way place, out of direct light. This preserves the delicate oils we desire for medicine-making.

Roughly chop the flowering tops and unopened buds of the St. John's wort. Add to the jar, cover with oil, and place in the sun for one day. If you make it on Midsummer and it happens to be a sunny day, all the better, as that is how it was done traditionally in Scandinavia. After that, place the jar somewhere warm and dark for four weeks, or until the oil turns red. Strain the plant matter out and compost it. Label the oil and store out of direct light. Apply to nerve pain or as a general massage oil for stiffness and muscle pain.

80. WILD STRAWBERRY

FRAGARIA SPP.

Rosaceae family



CAUTION: *None known. Generally considered safe.*

ORIGINS: Strawberries are native to South America, North America, Europe, and Asia.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Wild strawberries look much like their cultivated cousins, only smaller. They have three-lobed, heavily toothed leaves that are somewhat hairy. They also have runners or stems that spread outward and produce new plants. They have small, white, five-petaled flowers and bright red, fragrant teardrop-shaped fruits with small seeds embedded in their outsides.

PART USED: leaves, fruits

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: astringent, diuretic, laxative, liver tonic, cleansing

TASTE: sweet

SUBSTITUTIONS: blackberry, raspberry, apple, rose

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Harvest lightly. Strawberries can often be small plants, so take one leaf per plant if the population is small. They can be harvested any time of year, but note that in the fall, they can get bug-eaten and discolored, so avoid these. They are also easy to grow yourself in containers!

TRADITIONAL USES: The strawberries we see in the store are different from the strawberries many of our ancestors knew. Modern strawberries are a result of breeding Chilean strawberries with native northeastern North American strawberries in the mid-eighteenth century. There are roughly 20 species of strawberries and many hybrids. All species may have different sizes and flavors of fruits, but all of them have useful leaves for medicine. Small-fruited wild strawberries have been eaten for thousands of years. The species *Fragaria*

chiloensis was domesticated by the Picunche and Mapuche people of Chile more than 1,000 years ago.[1]

In the Haudenosaunee culture of North America, the strawberry was considered a gift from the Creator. Its leaves and roots have also been used to treat aching joints and diarrhea.[2] The Skokomish nation, the Blackfeet, and the Iroquois also traditionally used the roots for the same purposes.[3]

In Europe and the Mediterranean region, the strawberry fruit was used by ancient Greeks and Romans to treat gout and digestive issues.[4]

MODERN USES: Strawberry has fallen out of popular use in Western herbalism, but it is a generally safe and effective medicine. The leaves are a gentle astringent. Make an infusion with the leaves to treat diarrhea, gastric inflammation, skin infections, and as an appetite stimulant. They can be gathered any time for tea.

The fruit is not only delicious but also nourishing to the liver. Aside from being vitamin C and mineral rich, the fruit is full of antioxidants and a good source of folate and manganese.[5]

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

STRAWBERRY LEAF FACE TONER

Though this is for external use, you can use the same method to make a tea to drink by the cupful for diarrhea and stomach upsets

4 cups water
2 cups chopped fresh strawberry leaves

Heat the water in a medium saucepan over high heat until boiling. Turn off the heat and add the strawberry leaves. Stir and cover with a lid, then let steep for 30 minutes.

Pour the liquid through a strainer into a glass jar. Cool and cover with the lid and store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

After washing your face, pat some of this cold infusion on your skin as a toner to aid with redness, acne, and tired eyes.

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1 C. E. Finn et al., "The Chilean Strawberry (*Fragaria chiloensis*): Over 1000 Years of Domestication," *HortScience* 48 (2013): 418–21.

2 “Celebration of the Strawberry: Oneida Indian Nation,” Oneida Indian Nation website, June 15, 2022, www.oneidaindiannation.com/celebration-of-the-strawberry/.

3 James William Herrick, “Iroquois Medical Botany” (PhD thesis, State University of New York, Albany, PhD Thesis, 1977), 352.

4 G. Darrow, *The Strawberry History: Breeding and Physiology* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1996).

5 F. Giampieri et al., “The Strawberry: Composition, Nutritional Quality, and Impact on Human Health,” *Nutrition* 28 (2012): 9–19.

81. SUMAC, SUMACH, SHOEMAKE

RHUS SPP.

Anacardiaceae family

CAUTION: *Because of its high tannin content, do not ingest sumac for more than a few days if you are prone to kidney stones. Also, beware of poison sumac (* Toxicodendron vernix*), which can be confused with the medicinal species. Some people are allergic to all members of this family, which includes poison ivy (* Toxicodendron radicans*).*

ORIGINS: There are 35 sumac species that grow throughout the world on every continent but Antarctica and South America.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Sumacs are woody shrubs and even small trees that are crowned with reddish berries, which are called "sumac bobs." These thin-fleshed berries are sometimes fuzzy, and they are adorned with leaves divided up by many leaflets.

PART USED: leaves, berries, bark

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: astringent, styptic, drying, tonifying, refrigerant

TASTE: tart/sour

SUBSTITUTIONS: apple

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: There are three types of sumac with similar medicinal properties that grow in North America's southern region. They are smooth sumac (*Rhus glabra*), flame leaf/winged sumac (*R. copallina*), and staghorn sumac (*R. typhina*). These flowers ripen into hard, round berries. The berries turn a brilliant red to rusty as fall progresses. Sumac is a common roadside plant along with goldenrod and ironweed. Harvest the leaves in midsummer as flowers begin to bloom, and the berries before the first frost, when the vitamin C content is highest.

TRADITIONAL USES: The Indigenous peoples of North America used almost every part of the sumac plant, and it is still considered an important ceremonial and medicinal plant. The aerial parts prepared as a decoction were used as an astringent wash for burns, to stop internal and external bleeding, to control diarrhea, and to reduce fevers.[1] Leaves that were collected in the fall were dried and mixed with tobacco for ceremonial smoking blends.[2] The berries produce a rich black dye, and the leaves can be used to tan leather. Ripe berries infused in water were used to make a lemon-flavored beverage. Tommie Bass, Alabama folk herbalist of the twentieth century, considered the berries an important source of vitamin C. The berry tea can be gargled to treat sore throats or prepared as a compress to treat hemorrhoids.[3] Shoemac/shoemake was used during the Civil War era as a black shoe polish.[4]

The fruits of *Rhus coriaria* were used extensively in Levantine cuisine and as a tart spice in za'atar (a spice blend), along with herbs like marjoram, sesame, oregano, and thyme.

MODERN USES: Sumac is not commonly used in Western herbalism, but it is considered a potent folk remedy. Infusions of sumac berry or leaves are an effective treatment for colds, coughs, and fevers. The infusion is also known as a fast-acting diarrhea remedy. Also, the infusion can be applied topically to cool burns, clean wounds, stop bleeding, or serve as a douche for vaginal discharges. Gargle the tea to soothe a sore throat, mouth sores, or inflamed gums. A vitamin C–rich "lemonade" can also be made from the berries by soaking them in cold water overnight; this is great for cooling off in summer heat.

A lot of sumac's healing powers lie in its astringent properties. Interestingly, it has a special connection as a healer of mouth problems. Ulcers, sores, inflammations, and infections of the mouth can be treated with sumac inner and outer bark decoctions or berry decoctions. In modern studies, a tincture of smooth sumac's berries showed efficacy against certain strains of bacteria, including staph, *E. coli*, salmonella, and the much-feared candida yeast. *R. coriara* is also antibacterial and has been shown to be effective against *Streptococcus* bacteria, the cause of strep throat. Sumac is rich in gallic acid, which is one of the ways it acts against bacteria, fungal infections, and even certain viruses.[5] Sumac is also helpful as a diuretic, and tea made from the leaves can be helpful with edema and water retention.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

SUMAC LEAF TEA

½ cup dried sumac leaves, or 1 cup fresh leaves
4 cups freshly boiled water

Place the sumac leaves in a glass jar. Add the hot water, cover, and steep for 30 minutes. Pour the tea through a strainer, cover with the lid, and store 2 to 3 days in the fridge.

Take by the cupful for a gargle, mouthwash, or to wash a wound.

SUMAC BERRY TEA

1 ½ cups crushed fresh sumac berries
4 cups cold water

Place the berries in a glass pitcher, then add the cold water. Steep 24 hours in the fridge. In the morning, strain out the berries and store in the fridge up to 3 days.

As with the leaf tea, take this by the cupful for use as a gargle, mouthwashes, or wound wash. You can also sweeten with honey and enjoy as a tart lemonade-like beverage just for fun.

SUMAC COUGH SYRUP

Add 2 tablespoons of finely chopped wild cherry bark to this mix for some extra oomph, if desired.

1 cup water
½ cup sumac berries
1 cup honey

Bring the water to a boil in a medium saucepan. Turn off the heat and add the berries. Cover and steep for 30 minutes.

Pour the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer into a medium bowl, then return the liquid to the saucepan. While still warm, add the honey, stirring well. At this point you can add your cherry bark, if desired, and steep 1 hour covered. Pour the syrup into a 1-quart glass jar and close with the lid. Store in the fridge for up to 1 month.

Add some of this syrup to cold seltzer on a hot summer day, or use by the spoonful as a cough syrup.

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1 John R. Swanton, "Religious Beliefs and Medical Practices of the Creek Indians," SI-BAE Annual Report #42:473–672, 1928, 659.

2 Dilwyn J. Rogers, *Lakota Names and Traditional Uses of Native Plants by Sicangu (Brule) People in the Rosebud Area* (Rosebud Educational Society, 1980), 2.

3 Darryl Patton, *Mountain Medicine: The Herbal Remedies of Tommie Bass* (Natural Reader Press, 2004).

4 Patricia Kyritsi Howell, *Medicinal Plants of the Southern Appalachians* (Boston Academic Books, 2006).

5 Michael Vertolli, "Staghorn Sumac: Herbal Remedy for Heart Disease, Diabetes, and Colitis," *Vitality* magazine, January 19, 2023, http://vitalitymagazine.com/article/staghorn-sumac/.

82. SWEET ANNIE, SWEET WORMWOOD, QINGHAO

ARTEMISIA ANNUA

Asteraceae family

CAUTION: *Many people are allergic to asters, so proceed with caution when using for the first time. In high doses, the plant has liver toxicity like other Artemisias, owing to its thujone content. Do not use while pregnant or nursing.*

ORIGINS: Sweet annie is native to temperate Asia. It is now naturalized all over the world, including North America.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: This tall herbaceous plant has a brownish to purple stem and can grow up to six feet tall. The fragrant leaves are feathery and deeply divided into two to three leaflets. They have small, yellow-green flowers that almost resemble small pom-poms; they dangle off the tops of the plants and are also intensely fragrant when crushed.

PART USED: leaves, flowers; the flowers have the highest artemisinin content

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: antiparasitic, antimalarial, emmenagogue, antiviral, antifungal, cooling

TASTE: bitter, aromatic

SUBSTITUTIONS: mugwort, wormwood

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Sweet annie grows abundantly in temperate climates and can be aggressive like its cousins, mugwort and wormwood. Grow it in a pot to prevent wild spreading. It can be easily harvested outside its native range, as it is considered a weed. What better way to aid in the control of nonnative plant populations than by using them for medicine?

TRADITIONAL USES: Sweet annie is part of the ancient and well recorded history of Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and other temperate Asian cultural medicinal practices. It is known in traditional Chinese medicine as *qinghao*, where it has a long history of use as an important medicinal plant. The earliest written record of the use of *A. annua* comes from the anonymous text known as the *Wŭshíèr Bìngfāng* (Recipes for 52 Ailments), believed to date back to 215

BCE. According to the *Newly Compiled Materia Medica of the Tang Dynasty,* "crude stalks of *Artemisia annua* can be applied to incised (metal-inflicted) wounds, and effectively stop bleeding, promote tissue regeneration, and alleviate pain."[1]

In ancient Chinese medicine, sweet annie has been used to reduce fevers and stimulate sweating. Externally, it was applied topically to wounds to fight infections. Taken internally, it has been a remedy for gastrointestinal problems, as well as an emmenagogue to treat painful menstruation. Traditionally, it has also been used as a digestive to support liver function. The steamed plant material can be inhaled for respiratory support. Like many other *Artemisia* species, it is an antiparasitic and was also used to treat parasitic diseases of blood and liver.

MODERN USES: Sweet annie is still used much in the same way as it had been for centuries in both Africa and Asia. It is a strong antimalarial and has been remarkably well studied as an antiviral. Artemisinin, a compound derived from sweet annie, is a vital part of certain antimalarial drugs. (It was discovered in 1972 by Tu Youyou, who was awarded the 2015 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for her discovery. She did not have a doctorate and rediscovered the antimalarial power of sweet annie after looking into ancient Chinese medical texts; subsequently, alcohol extracts of the herb were found to be powerfully healing in the battle against malaria.)

Sweet annie is also a good remedy for other types of viral infections and has been used along with other herbs and pharmaceuticals for all types of respiratory infections. The tea is useful as a bitter for digestive upset stomachs, while the tincture is a great antiparasitic. Add half a dropperful of the tincture in a glass of icy seltzer water as a predinner digestive.

The fresh plant is best for medicine making because as it dries, it loses its potency and antioxidant value. Do not boil the plant material when treating viruses because the artemisinin will be destroyed the longer it is exposed to heat. Sweet annie is an excellent candidate for salve preparation because the artemisinin is fat soluble. It also makes the salve smell amazing!

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

SWEET ANNIE TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh tops
1:5, 60%: dried herb

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 15 drops to ½ teaspoon three times a day.

SWEET ANNIE TEA

If desired, add peppermint, yarrow, or lemon balm to the tea for respiratory infections.

1 to 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh sweet annie leaves
1 cup freshly boiled water

Place the leaves in a pint jar. Pour the hot water over them, cover, and let steep for 30 minutes. Strain and drink 3 cups a day for acute conditions.

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1 Tu Youyou, *From Artemisia Annua L. to Artemisinins: The Discovery and Development of Artemisinins and Antimalarial Agents* (Elsevier Science, 2017), 110.

83. SWEET GUM

LIQUIDAMBAR STYRACIFLUA

Altingiaceae family

CAUTION: *None known.*

ORIGINS: This tree is native to the southeastern United States, as well as parts of Mexico and South America.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Sweet gum is a unique, often very large tree with corky winglike structures along its narrower branches. The leaves are simple and star-shaped with five to seven lobes that are aromatic when crushed. They feature an iconic gumball or spiky seed pod dangling from the stem.

PART USED: resin (gum), leaves, inner bark

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: expectorant, antiseptic, astringent, sedative

TASTE: bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: cherry resin

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This is a native tree, though small branches can be harvested sustainably. These smaller branches can be found fallen to the ground after storms.

TRADITIONAL USES: This tree's resin, or the gum it exudes from its bark when wounded, is often included in salves intended for itching skin. The resin is sometimes called storax and is the main reason these trees are so medicinally powerful. It was used by the Aztec empire during the Paleo-Indian Period (ca. 10,000–7000 BCE) for skin infections.[1] The resin was also used to treat ulcers and boils in Cherokee traditional medicine.[2] A tea of the resin and bark was used as an astringent to help with fevers, diarrhea, and heavy menstrual bleeding. That tea was also used as a nervine, particularly for anxiety.

Legendary Southern folk herbalist Tommie Bass burned the gumballs and mixed the ash with lard to make his famous skin salves that were used to treat a

wide variety of skin issues and infections. During the Civil War, the inner bark was heated in milk and given to patients with dysentery.

MODERN USES: The sweet gum tree is known as an especially great remedy for respiratory illnesses, and it also has notable antibiotic and antimicrobial qualities. Sweet gum is helpful for respiratory congestion, chest colds, and coughs as an expectorant. There is some debate among herbalists today about the content and effects of a particular compound known as shikimic acid. It is often claimed that because sweet gum contains this compound, it is therefore "herbal Tamiflu." The reason for this belief is that the compound is a precursor of a compound that is indeed found in Tamiflu, a conventional treatment for influenza. Sweet gum balls do contain shikimic acid, and this may be one of the main reasons sweet gum is so effective as a flu-fighting herb. However, the way shikimic acid works in the body is more complex than being an herbal analog for Tamiflu, and it is not a stand-in for that drug. More research is needed to know exactly why it works; however, traditional knowledge shows a long history of effective use for perhaps more complex reasons than the contents of a single compound.[3]

There is a lot of online information about tincturing the green, unripe seeds in the spiky gum balls online to make that "herbal Tamiflu"; however, only traditional Chinese medicine employs this part of the tree, and only when parts are dried and steeped as a decoction. Use the inner bark, twigs, and leaves, adding a few gum balls to a tincture as a bonus. A decoction of the bark and leaves is also effective at settling the stomach and easing congestion in the airways.

The resin of the sweet gum can also be used in a pinch as a chew for a sore throat. It is helpful for irritations of the skin and makes a nice salve. Use the salve for persistent rashes that won't heal.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

SWEET GUM OIL SALVE

There are other ways to make this salve by infusing the resin in oil, but this version keeps well. You can gather the resin by gently scraping it off with a knife from wounds on a tree and placing it in a jar. Do not wound the tree purposely for this harvest.

2 to 3 tablespoons sweet gum resin
1 cup high-proof alcohol
About 2 cups olive oil

Place the resin bits in a glass jar and add the alcohol. Cover and allow to sit for 2 to 4 weeks, stirring occasionally.

When mostly dissolved, pour the mixture through a strainer into a medium saucepan. Add the olive oil and gently heat over low heat until the alcohol has evaporated and the mixture is well combined. Pour the oil into a clean, dry pint jar. Cover with a lid and keep up to 1 year well sealed in a cool, dark place.

Use this oil on hard-to-heal wounds that are not punctures.

Note: You can also use this oil to make a salve; see the instructions on page 35.

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1 J. M. Lingbeck et al., "Sweetgum: An Ancient Source of Beneficial Compounds with Modern Benefits," *Pharmacognosy Reviews* 9, no. 17 (2-15): 1–11.

2 Paul B. Hamel and Mary U. Chiltoskey. *Cherokee Plants and Their Uses: A 400 Year History* (Herald Publishing, 1975), 58.

3 Laramie Smith, "Herban Myths Debunked: Sweetgum, Shikimic Acid, and Tamiflu®Feral Foraging," Feral Foraging—Return to the Wild website, February 4, 2023, http://feralforaging.com/herban-myths-debunked-sweetgum-shikimic-acid-and-tamiflu/.

84. TULSI, HOLY BASIL

OCIMUM TENUIFLORUM

Lamiaceae family

CAUTION: *Avoid in pregnancy; historical uses indicate it can impact fertility. It can also affect blood sugar, so those with diabetes should avoid it.*

ORIGINS: Tulsi is native to the tropics and subtropics of Asia. It is also a special native plant of India and Sri Lanka and has now naturalized in the Caribbean, Pacific Islands, and parts of Africa. It is a sacred and special plant in its homelands and is one of the most beloved herbs today worldwide.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: This is a bushy perennial shrub in its native habitats, growing as an annual in temperate climates. Tulsi has square stems and opposite leaves like other mints and has fragrant, tender new green growth. Tulsi has spikes of small, purple-lipped flowers that bees and other pollinators love. It is not frost tolerant.

PART USED: aerial parts

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: warming, stimulating, nervine, drying

TASTE: pungent, spicy

SUBSTITUTIONS: linden, oats, rose

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Tulsi is very easy to grow in a garden in temperate climates, especially if you plant it in a warm place 6 to 8 weeks before the last frost. In its native lands, treat it like any mint family plant and pinch off the tops to encourage more bushy, tender growth.

TRADITIONAL USES: Tulsi is a sacred plant in Hindu belief, and so is grown in and around homes by Hindu people in India to protect and purify the home. In Ayurvedic practice, tulsi is known as “the incomparable one” and is revered as an elixir of life, unmatched by other herbs for both its spiritual and its medicinal properties.[1] Tulsi is often administered to calm an emotional disposition.[2] Tulsi

is also a folk remedy in India, used for digestive issues in adults and colic in babies, as well as for respiratory infections.

In Thailand, tulsi is an important medicinal plant, traditionally used for similar issues like digestive upsets, gas, ulcers, headaches, and sinus infections. There are other species of tulsi, like vanna tulsi (*Ocimum gratissimum*), which are native to Africa and southeastern Asia and are used as antimicrobial plants, ceremonial plants, and flavoring herbs.[3]

MODERN USES: Tulsi is extremely versatile, affecting the body's critical systems—namely, the cardiovascular, respiratory, and nervous systems. It is effective as a tonic for the heart, both spiritually and physically. Tulsi is high in antioxidants that protect the heart, and it can help lower cholesterol and lower blood pressure. The herb is supportive of the immune system and helps with colds, allergies, influenza, and general respiratory issues, such as infections.

Tulsi is known to soothe the nervous system and treat anxiety; however, one of its most remarkable qualities is its effect on concentration, focus, and mental acuity. When mixed with other herbs like rosemary and gotu kola, tulsi is a great aid for those who are scattered and need to come to center. The herb is also an adaptogen for anxiety and depression, and it is helpful in formulas mixed with other nervines like hawthorn, rose, oat, vervain, and motherwort.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

TULSI TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh flowering tops
1:4, 60%: dried herb

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 2 to 6 dropperfuls three times a day.

TULSI OXYMEL

1 ½ cups chopped fresh tulsi tops
2 cups apple cider vinegar (or other with at least 5% acidity)
2 cups raw honey

Place the tulsi in a glass jar and smash the herb down with a wooden spoon. Add the vinegar and honey and stir well. Place a square of wax paper on top of the jar and then

cover with the lid. Place the jar in a cool, dark spot for 2 weeks, stirring a couple of times a week.

Strain and pour into a glass jar and lid with a BPA-free plastic lid or one protected by wax paper and store in the fridge for up to 1 year or in a cool, dark cupboard for 6 to 8 months.

Stir 1 to 2 tablespoons of the oxymel into a glass of seltzer water over ice and add a squeeze of lemon or a squirt of bitters. Alternatively, mix it into a hot nervine tea of oats, rose, or linden for a zing! Enjoy this beautiful elixir as a treat.

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1 N. Singh et al., *Tulsi: The Mother Medicine of Nature*, 2nd ed. (International Institute of Herbal Medicine, 2010), 28–47.

2 P. Pattanayak et al., "Ocimum sanctum Linn: A Reservoir Plant for Therapeutic Applications: An Overview," *Pharmacogosy Reviews* 4 (2010): 95–105.

3 Juliet Blankespoor, *The Healing Garden: Cultivating and Handcrafting Herbal Remedies* (HarperCollins, 2022).

85. VIOLET, DOG VIOLET, COMMON BLUE VIOLET, SWEET VIOLET

VIOLA SORORIA, V. ODORATA

Violaceae family

CAUTION: *Eating too many violet leaves will show off their laxative powers. Violets contain salicylates in small amounts, and while generally they are considered a nutritive food herb, they could potentially bother a person allergic to aspirin. Use caution with aspirin allergies. The roots are toxic and should not be ingested. The plant is not related to the African violet.*

ORIGINS: There are 550 violet species worldwide, largely found in temperate climates. Many violet species are used worldwide for food and medicine. The common blue violet (*Viola sororia*) is one of the most abundant species in eastern and central North America. It is also found in California. The sweet violet (*V. odorata*) is one of the most common species used in Asia and Europe for medicine. It has escaped gardens and now grows throughout Australia and North America.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Violet's lovely five-petaled flowers are not symmetrical; they can come in many shades of yellow, white, and purple. These two species of violet in particular have tender heart-shaped, toothed leaves growing in a basal rosette. The plant is perennial.

PART USED: flowers, leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: cooling, moistening, anti-inflammatory, alterative, demulcent, diuretic, lymphatic, nutritive

TASTE: acrid, sweet

SUBSTITUTIONS: plantain

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Violets are often thought of as weeds even when they are a native species. They grow abundantly in lawns, gardens, and other disturbed places, making it easy to harvest them often so long as they are out of sprayed areas. Use scissors to gather the leaves and flowers evenly by pinching them in your fingers and then trimming below them.

TRADITIONAL USES: Violets have a long and varied history of use. Many European folk medicine traditions, especially those of the North Atlantic Islands, used violet syrup for dry, hacking coughs—namely, whooping cough. Children were often given violet flower syrup not only for colds and coughs but also as a laxative.[1] Cherokee folks use *V. sororia* for coughs, colds, as a poultice for boils and skin issues, and as a spring tonic.[2] As *V. canescens* is native to India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Pakistan, it has been used there for centuries as a cough, cold, anticancer, and malaria remedy.[3]

MODERN USES: Violets are generally soothing, moistening, and calming to inflammation. They are also helpful for the lymphatic system and are generally one of the safest herbs. Violet leaf and flower teas are excellent for times when the lymph nodes are swollen, hot, or painful, especially during viral infections like the flu. The tea can also be used to treat grief. When the chest feels tight as often happens when one feels sad or anxious, make this tea alongside hawthorn, linden, rose, and tulsi for gentle relief. Drink this freely in times of emotional hardship and loss. The tea is also helpful when dealing with urinary tract infections to soothe the burning sensation with its mucilaginous properties. Mix violet alongside an antiseptic like juniper for these situations. The leaf tea is also soothing to other mucosa aside from the genitourinary tract, and it is also helpful for ulcers, IBS, ulcerative colitis, and other gut inflammation alongside other therapies. Cherry bark or peach leaf can be added to tea blends for food sensitivities or allergic reactions that cause gut unhappiness.

A violet leaf poultice can be used much like a plantain poultice for scrapes, cuts, and stings. A violet tea or compress made from the leaves is effective for herpes outbreaks as well. The leaf compress is also especially soothing on the groin lymph nodes during herpes outbreaks when they are painful to the touch. Alternatively, use a strong violet leaf tea as a gentle sitz bath to help heal the lesions caused by this virus. The lymphatic action is also excellent when applied as a massage oil.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

VIOLET FLOWER AND LEAF VINEGAR

This vinegar has multiple uses; it even makes a nutritive salad dressing.

1 cup chopped fresh violet leaves and flowers (or more as desired, for beautiful color)
About 2 cups organic apple cider vinegar

Cover the violet flowers in a jar with vinegar, lid, and let sit in a cool, dark place for 2 weeks.

Strain the flowers out into a glass jar, cover the jar with the lid, and store up to 6 months in a cool, dark place.

Take by the tablespoon, mixed with some honey for coughs, or added to warm tea for colds and sore throats.

VIOLET FLOWER OXYMEL

2 cups fresh violet flowers
2 cups organic apple cider vinegar (or other vinegar with at least 5% acidity)
2 cups raw honey

Crush the violet flowers gently by squeezing them then place them in a 1-quart glass jar. Add the vinegar and honey and stir well with a wooden spoon. Place a square of wax paper on top and then close with the lid. Let sit in a cool, dark spot for 2 weeks, stirring a couple of times a week.

Strain and pour into a glass jar, cover with a BPA free plastic lid or add a piece of wax paper to protect a metal one, and store 6 months in a cool, dark place.

Mix 1 teaspoon into hot water for coughs, along with peppermint, yarrow, and elderflower tea. You can also mix 1 tablespoon of this with some iced seltzer and add a squeeze of lemon; the lemon will have a pH reaction and turn the oxymel from a beautiful dark blue color to magenta! (This is a lovely medicine to make with children so they can delight in this magical color change.)

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1 David Hoffmann, *Medical Herbalism: The Science and Practice of Herbal Medicine* (Healing Arts Press, 2003).

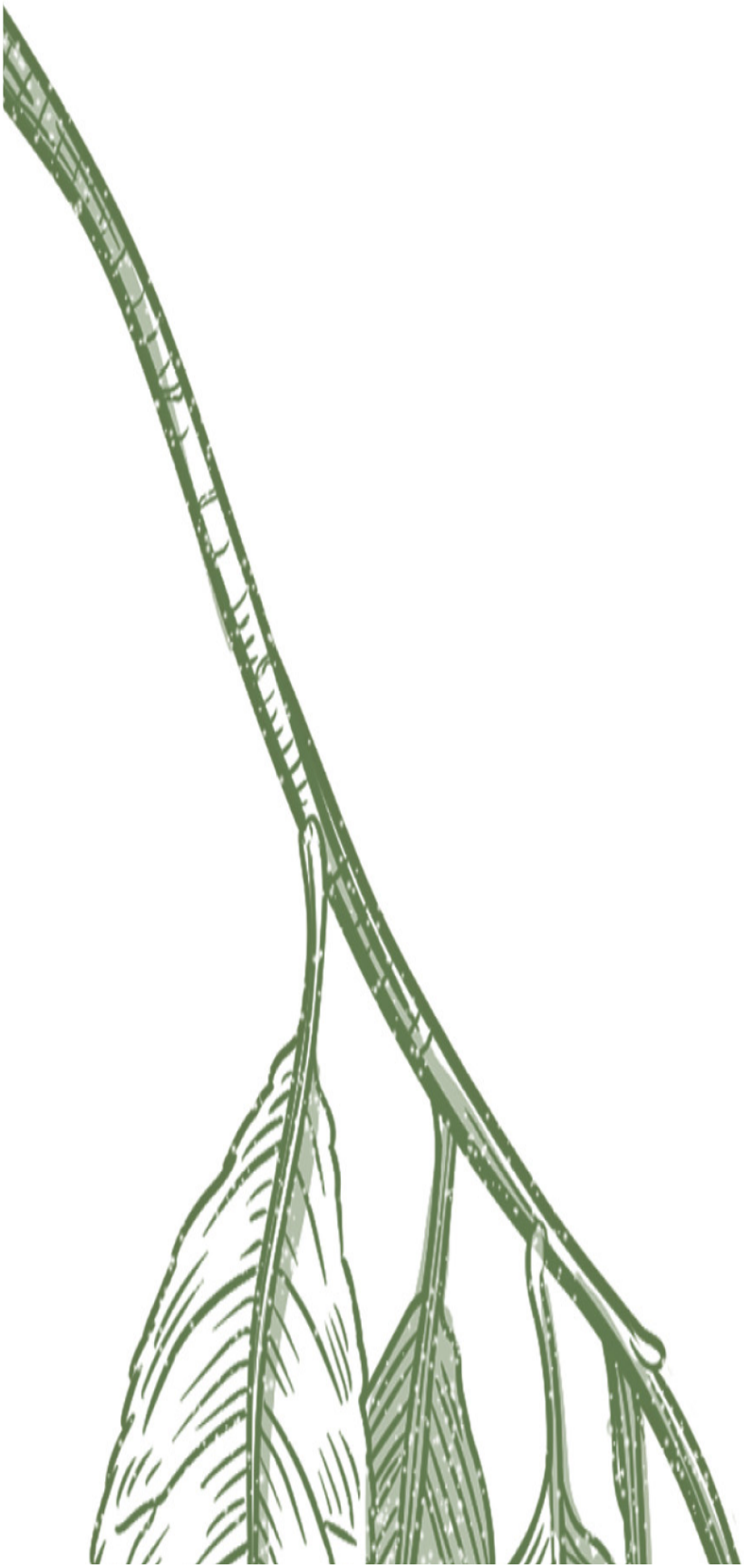
2 Paul B. Hamel and Mary U. Chiltoskey, *Cherokee Plants and Their Uses: A 400 Year History* (Herald Publishing, 1975), 60.

3 Maria Masood et al., "*Viola canescens*: Herbal Wealth to Be Conserved," *Journal of Botany*, Article ID 345451 (2014).

86. WILD CHERRY

PRUNUS SEROTINA, P. VIRGINIANA

Rosaceae family



CAUTION: *The leaves, twigs, and bark of cherry contain a cyanogenic glycoside called prunasin. All cherry trees contain this chemical, as well as amygdalin, which is converted into hydrocyanic acid (prussic acid) in water. It is toxic in large doses and is most present in wilted fresh cherry leaves and bark. Do not use while pregnant or nursing.*

ORIGINS: Wild cherry is native to the Americas and grows in eastern North America along the Atlantic from Nova Scotia to central Florida, plus west to Minnesota and south to eastern Texas.[1] It is a common tree in the southeast.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Wild cherries are pioneer species, one of the first to grow on field edges. Their leaves are pointy, elliptical, and serrated. They have beautiful small, five-petaled white flowers that give way to shiny black drupes, or berries, that hang down in clusters called *racemes*. The bark is smooth and grayish with lenticels (horizontal scratches). These scratches are apparent on younger, thinner bark, but as the tree ages its lower parts become flaky and chipped.

PART USED: inner bark, young twigs, resin (sap)

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: digestive, astringent, tonic, antispasmodic, cooling

TASTE: bitter, sweet

SUBSTITUTIONS: fennel

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Clip small branches carefully or use windfallen branches for medicine. Removing the crunchy, dark outer bark is necessary to get to the useful greenish inner bark. A drawknife is useful to scrape off the outer bark from fallen trees. If you remove all the bark in a ring around a tree, even if you leave bark above and below the ring, this is called girdling and will kill the tree. Do not do this.

TRADITIONAL USES: Wild cherry bark has been one of the most important medicines in temperate North America. The dried inner bark was commonly used by many eastern First Nations people. It was most often made into an infusion for colds, fevers, diarrhea, and as a general pain reliever because of its sedative qualities. Early European colonizers adopted this medicine and included wild cherry in many of their own cough medicine recipes.

The wild cherry root was also used to treat conditions that included intestinal worms, burns, cold sores, and other skin ailments. The fruits were used to make cough syrups by tribes such as the Delaware.[2] The European settlers copied this practice and wild cherry bark was used in herbal syrups and teas for coughs and colds. Historically, young trees were harvested in the fall, when the chemical constituents are most mobile. That is, in the fall, trees pull many of their nutrients back into their roots for winter storage, meaning the compounds are more present in the bark at this time. The shiny, birch-like bark of young wild cherries also peels well at this time because of its higher water content during this nutrient mobility.

In Appalachian folk medicine, wild cherry bark was used in cough medicines, tonics, and mild sedatives. The bark worked as an antispasmodic, helping to quell the cough reflex and promoting restful sleep. For this reason, it was also used for treating asthma.[3]

MODERN USES: Wild cherry bark is cooling and sedative for the lungs, so it's a classic respiratory and a cough relaxant for a reason. As a decoction or syrup, wild cherry is great for dry, rapid coughs and fevers. Administer the medicine before someone has become exhausted from coughing and the cough reflex is still robust. It is also an excellent digestive, and the bark makes pleasant-tasting bitters, with a flavor that resembles Amaretto. It is best not to boil the bark.

As noted, wild cherry bark is relaxing for the nerves and for the heart. It is also useful for histamine responses, skin irritation, and mild food allergy responses, much like its cousin, the peach leaf. It is great for bug bites and stings as well; make a diluted peach and cherry leaf vinegar to spray on itchy skin in the summer!

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

WILD CHERRY BARK AND FENNEL COUGH SYRUP

2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh wild cherry bark
4 cups cool water
⅔ cup honey or maple syrup
4 tablespoons Fennel Seed Tincture (page 74)

Place the wild cherry bark in a medium bowl and cover with the cool water. Allow it to sit overnight, or at least 12 hours. In the morning, pour it through a strainer into the top of a double boiler. Add the honey, mixing well with a wooden spoon. Put some water in the bottom pot, then place the double boiler on medium-low heat. Gently heat the mixture, stirring occasionally, until fully combined, but do not simmer.

Pour the syrup through a strainer into a glass jar. Add the tincture and allow to cool. Cover with the lid and store in the fridge for up to 1 month.

Take 1 tablespoon of the syrup up to eight times a day for a dry cough.

WILD CHERRY BARK BITTERS

½ cup finely chopped fresh wild cherry bark
About 4 cups high-proof brandy

Place the bark in a glass jar and add the brandy. Cover and set aside in a cool, dark place for 4 to 8 weeks.

Strain and store in a glass jar or amber glass bottle out of sunlight for up to 10 years.

Use by the dropperful in a little warm water before or after a big meal or with indigestion.

WILD CHERRY BARK TINCTURE

Cherry bark tinctures are best made a little differently than any others. This particular technique comes from the wonderful Michigan herbalist Jim McDonald.[4] Cherry bark tinctures best after being finely ground and then being hydrated with water before adding alcohol. This allows the alcohol to more fully penetrate the cell walls of the bark.

The recipe is 1 part bark, 3 parts water, and 2 parts 95% alcohol. Take 1 part cherry bark and add three times as much water in 1-quart glass jar. For example, take ½ cup of bark and add 1 ½ cups of water to hydrate it overnight. Then add your alcohol, which should be 1 cup in this example. Allow this to tincture for 4 to 8 weeks, then strain, squeezing out all the alcohol, and store the tincture in a dark, dry place in a labeled, lined jar.

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures.

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1 Elbert L. Little Jr., *Checklist of United States Trees (Native and Naturalized)* (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, 1979), 2952.

2 Gladys Tantaquidgeon, *A Study of Delaware Indian Medicine Practice and Folk Beliefs* (Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1942), 68, 82.

3 J. K. Crellin et al., *Herbal Medicine Past and Present* (Duke University Press, 1990), 152.

4 https://www.herbcraft.org/

87. WITCH HAZEL

HAMAMELIS VIRGINIANA

Hamamelidaceae family

CAUTION: *None commonly known for external uses.*

ORIGINS: Three species of this tree are native to the United States, where it has been a valuable ingredient in traditional Indigenous medicine. There are also native species in both China and Japan.

PART USED: twigs (bark), leaves

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: astringent, anti-inflammatory, stops bleeding

TASTE: astringent

SUBSTITUTIONS: oak bark

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This short tree is often abundant in areas near rivers and streams. Prioritize the harvest of windfallen branches, which are easy to find after storms; otherwise, snip the twigs sparingly to prevent stressing the tree.

TRADITIONAL USES: The first appearance witch hazel makes in print was in Shakespeare's play *Henry VIII*. Witch hazel in the United States was often mistaken for hazelnut (*Corylus* spp.) by European settlers. For this reason, it is hard to parse out the surrounding lore and traditional uses. Regardless, witch hazel became part of the European magical tradition of dowsing or divining for water and precious metals after colonization in the Americas began. Before colonization, Indigenous peoples had established important relationships with this native tree; its seeds were eaten by some tribes, as well as considered sacred beads by at least the Menominee.[1] The Menominee also made a decoction and rubbed it on their legs to keep them supple during sports and to relieve back problems.

Witch hazel's astringent properties were greatly utilized in Indigenous medicine. The Cherokee make a twig infusion to treat fever, colds, sore throat, and tuberculosis. They also used it to wash sores and to alleviate other skin problems. The Iroquois used a twig infusion to stop bloody dysentery and

cholera, and used a poultice of branches or drank a decoction for asthma, colds, coughs, consumption, and heaves.[2] Decoctions or infusions were also used to treat arthritis, kidney problems, and toothache and to purify the blood. The Ojibwa used an infusion for skin troubles and to wash sore eyes. They also took it as an emetic in cases of poisoning and used it to stimulate appetite. The Potawatomi put twigs in their sweat baths to relieve sore muscles. The European settlers eventually adopted these uses and distilled the leaves and twigs into a popular astringent remedy for abrasions, beauty, lotions, and damaged skin that is still widely used today.

MODERN USES: Witch hazel is a valuable astringent for a wide variety of external issues. The distilled extract is readily available in pharmacies around the world. The tannins in the bark and leaves aid in tightening and drying boggy tissues. The decoction is a fantastic first aid and cosmetic remedy and makes an excellent soak for wounds, especially when mixed with Epsom salts if infection is suspected. The decoction or distillate can also be added to spray bottles to mist the face or elsewhere after shaving to soothe rashes.

Witch hazel is a wonderful remedy for hemorrhoids, itchy skin, or broken blood vessels and veins when used as a compress; just dip a clean cloth in the warm decoction and hold it on the affected place three to five times a day, if possible, to help tighten and soothe inflamed tissues. It also makes an excellent sore-eye compress, though be careful that it's not too strong, as it can irritate the eyes. The infusion has been used in emergencies to stop internal bleeding, but large doses can upset the stomach. Use caution when taking witch hazel internally; some prefer to use yarrow or shepherd's purse for internal uses.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

WITCH HAZEL LEAF INFUSION

1 ½ cups chopped fresh witch hazel leaves
3 cups freshly boiled water

Place the witch hazel in a glass jar. Add the hot water and cover the jar with a cloth or loose lid. Let steep for 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Pour the infusion through a strainer, cover with the lid, and store in the fridge up to 3 days.

To use, dip a clean cloth into the infusion and use it as a warm compress to treat sore eyes and broken veins.

HERB-INFUSED WITCH HAZEL

You can make your own herbal witch hazel by tincturing your favorite fresh herbs in distilled witch hazel. Choose herbs that are nourishing to the skin.

2 cups fresh rosemary, calendula, rose petals, or lavender flowers
1 (16-ounce) bottle witch hazel distillate

Place the herbs in a 1-quart glass jar and pour in the witch hazel. Cover, set in a cool, dark spot, and allow to infuse 2 to 4 weeks

Pour the infusion through a strainer into a medium bowl. Rinse the jar and then add the infusion. Cover and store in the refrigerator for long-term storage, as the water content is high.

Use this as a toner by dabbing on a cotton ball and using on the face after cleansing to tighten pores and soothe irritated skin. You can also use it topically for wounds and as a sunburn soother.

WITCH HAZEL DECOCTION

2 cups chopped witch hazel twigs
4 cups water

Place the bark and water in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer for 1 hour, or until the water is reduced by half. Pour the decoction through a strainer into a glass jar. Store any excess in a glass jar with a lid up to 3 days in the fridge.

Use some of the decoction to moisten a clean washcloth and apply as a warm compress or use as a wound soak. This decoction also makes an excellent sitz bath for post-surgery sore urogenital tissues, birthing, bleeding, or other irritations or injuries.

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1 Daniel Austin and P. Narodny Honychurch, *Florida Ethnobotany* (CRC, 2004), 340.

2 Austin and Honychurch, *Florida Ethnobotany*, 340.

88. WORMWOOD

ARTEMISIA ABSINTHIUM

Asteraceae family

CAUTION: *Avoid this herb in pregnancy and while breastfeeding. Do not give to children. Do not take over long periods of time. Avoid mixing with medications. It is toxic in prolonged, large doses.*

ORIGINS: Wormwood is native to Europe, the Mediterranean region, North Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Wormwood is noticeably silvery and has feathery, grayish, softly fuzzy leaves. The stems get woody with age and when crushed, the leaves and stems emit an aromatic aroma.

PART USED: fresh or dried leaves, flowers

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: digestive, anti-inflammatory, antiparasitic, antifungal, anti-viral, emmenagogue

TASTE: bitter, pungent

SUBSTITUTIONS: mugwort, black walnut

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Wormwood is easy to propagate from its seeds or by dividing its roots in autumn. The plant is invasive in many places outside its native range. It is relatively abundant in some parts of North America as a naturalized species, yet it is considered invasive in South Dakota. Snip the tops with sharp scissors when it begins to flower; however, it can be harvested at any time.

TRADITIONAL USES: Wormwood has a long history of use. The genus name *Artemisia* is after the Greek goddess Artemis; it is said she taught the healing centaur Chiron the virtues of this fragrant herb. Medicinally, in ancient Greece it was used as an antidote for mushroom poisoning, for treating gastric issues, and for diseases of the female reproductive system. The visionary healing abbess of the Germanic early middle ages, Hildegard von Bingen, recommended it for

headaches, melancholy, toothaches, and incontinence.[1] In what is now the Czech Republic, the smoke was traditionally used for toothaches.[2] It was also a traditional brewing herb, used along with yarrow and other aromatic herbs in early western European alehouses.[3]

In Polish folk medicine, wormwood was considered detoxifying and restorative, helpful for gastrointestinal, liver, and biliary tract diseases; it was also supposed to cure skin, ear, and eye diseases, as well as remove odor from the mouth and "drive out worms."[4] In Indian Unani medicine, wormwood was the main ingredient in the drug afsanteen, which was administered for chronic fever, hepatitis, and edema.[5] In traditional Chinese medicine, wormwood has been used in cancer therapy.[6]

The legendary liquor absinthe has wormwood as one of its major ingredients. Claims that this beverage is hallucinogenic or toxic because of its wormwood content are largely based on folk beliefs and moral panics in France during the nineteenth century. The compound thujone, found in wormwood, has since come under fire for its liver-damaging capacity, but it was most likely not the culprit of these moral panics. In fact, it was more likely unregulated adulterants like copper sulfate, antimony, and poorly made alcohol containing methanol that were to blame for the "absinthism" many claimed was ruining the moral health of nineteenth-century Europe along with standard alcoholism.[7]

MODERN USES: Wormwood is still largely used in similar ways today. It is helpful as a digestive, emmenagogue, antiparasitic, and wound healer. Small, infrequent doses are helpful; use caution, as it can interact with medications rather unpredictably and in large doses has toxicity. It is best taken as a tea or in very small doses as a tincture.

Wormwood has a unique ability to aid the liver when it has been exposed to certain toxic compounds, such as lead.[8] Wormwood makes a good appetite stimulant and can be taken as a weak tea before meals (it's so bitter!) to stimulate digestion. It can also be drunk as a tea after meals for digestive support, especially after a rich meal or when one has gas or bloating.

The tincture has a more powerful effect and is used in formulas to treat parasites—namely, roundworms—along with herbs like black walnut or even garlic. The tinctures can be taken in 10- to 20-drop doses in warm water three times a day. The tea is also helpful for candida and can be drunk in conjunction with a sugar-free diet to help combat overgrowth in the digestive tract.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

WORMWOOD TINCTURE

1:5, 70%: dried flowering tops

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Start at 5 drops for a dose and do not exceed ½ teaspoon at a time.

WORMWOOD TEA

This tea can also be used as a warm wash for wounds, ringworm (along with other treatments), and jock itch.

1 tablespoon chopped dried wormwood flowering tops
About 3 cups freshly boiled water

Place the wormwood in a glass jar. Pour in the hot water, cover, and steep for 1 hour.

Pour the tea through a strainer into a jar. Cover with the lid and store in the fridge for up to 3 days.

Drink the tea in 1-cup doses three times a day.

Caution: *Take this herb for no longer than 4 weeks.*

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1 Nancy Arrowsmith, *Essential Herbal Wisdom* (Llewellyn Publishers, 2009), 534.

2 C. M. Stevans and Cora Linn Daniels, eds., *Encyclopædia of Superstitions, Folklore, and the Occult Sciences of the World* (University Press of the Pacific, 2003). 2:863.

3 Arrowsmith, *Essential Herbal Wisdom*, 532.

4 A. Szopa et al., "*Artemisia absinthium L.*: Importance in the History of Medicine, the Latest Advances in Phytochemistry and Therapeutical, Cosmetological and Culinary Uses," *Plants* 9, no. 9 (2020): 1063.

5 J. Ahamad et al., "Pharma cognostic Review on *Artemisia absinthium*," *International Research Journal of Pharmacology*10 (2019): 26–33.

6 H. S. Parekh et al., "A New Dawn for the Use of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Cancer Therapy," *Molecular Cancer* 8 (2009): 1–8.

7 Jesse Hicks, “The Devil in a Little Green Bottle: A History of Absinthe,” Science History Institute, October 5. 2010, http://www.sciencehistory.org/stories/magazine/the-devil-in-a-little-green-bottle-a-history-of-absinthe/.

8 O. Kharoubi et al., “Role of Wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*) Extract on Oxidative Stress in Ameliorating Lead Induced Haematotoxicity,” *African Journal of Traditional and Complementary and Alternative Medicine* 5, no. 3 (2008): 263–70.

89. YARROW

ACHILLEA MILLEFOLIUM

Asteraceae family

CAUTION: *Some people are very allergic to aster family plants, but yarrow is often widely tolerated. As it can help bring on the menses, avoid during pregnancy.*

ORIGINS: Yarrow is native to Asia, Europe, and North America; its origin and spread are actively studied today. There has long been a story that yarrow is not native to North America, but it looks as if it is a species complex, rather than one distinct species, resulting from a cross between European or Asian plants and native North American species.[1] All that said, *Achillea millefolium* is now widely spread and is a circumboreal plant, meaning it's found around the world and difficult to distinguish from related plants without genetic testing.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Yarrow has small, slightly hairy, fern- or feather-like green leaves that give off a piney smell when crushed. The small, tightly packed white to slightly pinkish flowers have five petals with yellow interiors. The stems that grow when the plant is flowering are about 1 foot high. There are many colorful cultivars, but the white-flowering wild species is the one most commonly used for medicine.

PART USED: leaves, flowers, roots

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: diaphoretic, antiseptic, febrifuge, vulnerary, antimicrobial, astringent

TASTE: bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: blackberry root

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: Yarrow is easy to cultivate and often grows in abundance. Snip the flowers sparingly when they first open and their centers are still orange, or use its leaves anytime. Gather both leaves and flower heads for tincture.

TRADITIONAL USES: Yarrow has a long history of use, beginning in ancient Greece and Rome. Its genus name, *Achillea*, refers to legends of Achilles, the Greek warrior. In Greek mythology, Thetis bathed her son Achilles in yarrow, which gave the hero its protective powers to make him invincible wherever the liquid had touched his skin, save for his heel, which was never submerged as this was where she held him—hence, the Achilles' heel as a symbol of vulnerability. Nevertheless, yarrow has a long history as a warrior's herb, and it was used in combat for soldiers to staunch blood flow from wounds.[2]

Yarrow was once used as an ingredient for beer brewing, before the requirement for using hops. It was also made into a powerful bitter.[3] Yarrow has also been used in Chinese medicine where it is called *ya luo*. It was used to move qi and blood and to treat angina, chest pain, shortness of breath, abdominal cramping, headaches, vertigo, palpitations, varicose veins, hemorrhoids, infections, urinary stones, frequent urination, spermatorrhea, and leucorrhea. It also helps with bleeding and wounds.[4] Yarrow has also been extensively used in Indigenous North American folk medicine, for everything from nosebleeds to burns, to kidney infections and liver problems.[5]

MODERN USES: Yarrow is one of the most well-known wound herbs, and rightly so. It is astringent and antiseptic, meaning it helps calm inflamed, wounded skin while also helping to prevent infection. The tea and tincture can be used as a gargle for sore throats and as a mouthwash for inflamed gums and mouth sores. The tea is useful as a sitz bath for hemorrhoids and helps relieve the pain of herpes sores, surgery wounds, and postpartum healing, especially when mixed with other skin-healing herbs like calendula, rose, and plantain. The decoction or strong tea is also excellent for animal bites and scratches.[6] (That is,

ensuring that the animal is not rabid—unfortunately, the humble yarrow cannot heal rabies!)

Yarrow has a strange and near magical ability to both promote and staunch bleeding, especially when it comes to menstruation. Consuming yarrow tincture and tea helps induce delayed menses, and it also helps curb internal bleeding, colds, flus, and fevers. One delicious and effective remedy is a tea made from yarrow leaves and flowers, mint leaves, and hot elderflower to help sweat out a fever and drive out an illness.

Yarrow roots are medicinal, and as we have learned from Indigenous wisdom, they can be chewed to relieve toothache pain.[7] Yarrow is also helpful for the pancreas and can aid digestive issues; drink as a tea after meals or as a bitters blend before eating. You can also use yarrow to treat urinary tract infections, paired with apple cider vinegar and juniper berry tincture, as well as with demulcent herbs like plantain and marshmallow.

Note: Yarrow has constituents that are soluble in all types of liquids: alcohol, water, honey, vinegar, and more.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

YARROW TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh leaves and flowers

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 1 to 2 dropperfuls up to six times a day for acute conditions.

YARROW LEAF VINEGAR

About 4 cups chopped fresh yarrow leaves and flowers
About 4 cups organic apple cider vinegar

Place the yarrow in a glass jar. Add the vinegar and use a wooden spoon to press the herbs down gently into the liquid. Cover with a square of wax paper and then add the lid. Place in a cool, dark place and let infuse for 2 weeks.

Strain and pour into a glass jar with a lid. Store in a cool, dark place for up to 6 months.

Use the vinegar by diluting it in a basin of water to soak troublesome wounds. Or, add a tablespoon of it to sitz baths for treating vaginal discharge, yeast infections, and other itchy symptoms. You can also thin the vinegar and use it in a spray bottle for "summer legs," or rashy, itchy, bug-bitten skin!

Caution: *Remember not to put straight vinegar on your nethers, as it will burn!*

YARROW-INFUSED OIL AND SALVE

FOR THE OIL

2 cups finely chopped, dried yarrow leaves and flowers
2 cups oil (see page 35)

Place the yarrow in the top of a double boiler and add the oil. Put some water in the bottom of the double boiler, then place the unit on low heat and gently heat the herbs until the scent of the yarrow has filled the air, about 3 hours. (Alternatively, fill a jar with the herbs, add the oil, cover the jar, and place in a cool, dark place to slowly infuse for 1 month.)

Pour the infused oil through a strainer into a 1-pint glass jar. Cover with the lid and store for up to 1 year in a cool, dark place.

You can use this herbal oil to treat wounds and sores or continue on to make it into a salve.

FOR THE SALVE

4 cups yarrow-infused oil
2 cups beeswax or soy wax

Pour the infused oil into the top of a double boiler. Add water to the bottom pot and place the double boiler over low heat. Gently warm the infused oil, then add the beeswax. Stir and continue to warm the mixture until the beeswax is melted and blended with the oil without simmering or boiling it (see Note).

Pour the salve into salve tins of your choice. Cover with the lid and let them rest until solid, then store in a cool place out of direct light. Apply a dab with a cotton swab on non-puncture wounds, scrapes, and abrasions.

Note: Adding a bit more wax will make a firmer salve while less will yield an oilier consistency. One trick to check your salve consistency is to dip a metal spoon in the warm salve, place it on a little saucer, and put it in the freezer for a few moments. This will cause the salve to solidify and give you an idea of how smooth or hard it will be when cooled. You can add more wax if it's still quite oily or add more oil if it's too hard. This tip comes from the amazing Abby Artemisia of the Wander School![8]

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2 William Thomas Fernie, *Herbal Simples Approved for Modern Uses of Cure* (Wright, 1914). 563.

3 Stephen Harrod Buhner, *Sacred and Herbal Healing Beers: The Secrets of Ancient Fermentation* (Brewers Publications, 1998), 183.

4 "Yarrow (Ya Luo)," White Rabbit Institute of Healing, accessed December 9, 2024, https://www.whiterabbitinstituteofhealing.com/herbs/yarrow/.

5 Daniel E. Moerman, *Native American Food Plants: An Ethnobotanical Dictionary* (Timber Press, 2010).

6 From lectures with 7song, https:/7song.com/.

7 Scott Kloos, *Pacific Northwest Medicinal Plants: Identify, Harvest, and Use 120 Wild Herbs for Health and Wellness* (Timber Press, 2017), 384.

8 https://www.thewanderschool.com/.

90. YELLOWROOT

XANTHORHIZA SIMPLICISSIMA

Ranunculaceae family

CAUTION: *High doses of the decoction can inhibit absorption of B vitamins. Do not use during pregnancy.*

ORIGINS: Yellowroot, whose scientific name *Xanthorhiza simplicissima* means "yellow root," is also called brook feather. It is a native plant in North America, from New York to West Virginia and southward to Florida and Alabama. It is most often found along creeks and waterways, waving in the cool breezes out of direct sunlight. It is one of the few woody species in the buttercup family.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Yellowroot is distinctive in its riverside habitats, as it has a thin woody stem topped with long, frond-like leaves. When cut, the woody stem is bright yellow along with the roots. The yellow color of the roots is due to the presence of an important and powerful medicinal compound, berberine. This compound gets its name from a plant rich with this property, which is invasive in many places around the world—the barberry.

PART USED: roots, woody stems

PROPERTIES/ENERGETICS: astringent, antibacterial, antimicrobial, tonifying, bitter, cholagogue, hepatic, anti-inflammatory.

TASTE: bitter

SUBSTITUTIONS: barberry, Oregon grape root

WILDCRAFTING NOTES: This is a native plant, and as such, if similar invasive species are available, prioritize harvesting those instead. While yellowroot is not currently endangered, any herb that's seen as valuable can become endangered quickly if demand increases. Yellowroot can grow in thick stands along rivers and creek sides where it helps with erosion, so please only harvest if you are well acquainted with a local population and can monitor and protect the plants over time. Yellowroot is easy to grow in wet, woodland areas, so if you can, please grow it yourself. While the root is traditionally used, the woody stems contain

plenty of the golden berberine compound that we seek for medicine. You can simply snip a few stems and leave the roots behind to prevent killing the entire plant.

TRADITIONAL USES: Yellowroot has been used as a remedy by many Indigenous nations. It is important to note that historically, goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*) was also often referred to as yellowroot, so it can be confusing to differentiate the species. The Catawba people in the southeast use a decoction of the roots as a cold remedy, liver tonic, and digestive aid. Cherokee peoples also use this root extensively. The decoction served as a blood tonic, a remedy for digestive complaints, and a medicine for external irritations. The Cherokee used yellowroot as a topical tea for hemorrhoids and a decoction for sore eyes. They also produced a concoction of wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*), alder (*Alnus serrulata*), wild cherry (*Prunus serotina*), and rattlesnake plantain (*Goodyera pubescens*), which they used as a blood tonic and appetite stimulant.

The roots and stems were also chewed for mouth sores and gum inflammation, as well as sore throats. One of the most interesting ways that humans have used herbs is with the ashes of the burned whole plant. The Cherokee used the ashes as a cancer remedy.[1] Ashes were also used by Black folk in the southeastern United States as a tea for colds and diabetes.[2]

MODERN USES: A decoction made from yellowroot is a wonderful remedy for stomach ulcers, especially those caused by *H. pylori.* Yellowroot is antibacterial and can be swished in the mouth as a mouthwash for ulcers and sores of the gums and tongue. The decoction is helpful for candida internally but can also be used externally as a wash. It is more astringent than a decoction of Oregon grape and goldenseal, making it useful for inflamed eyes and other skin infections. The decoction can also be used in and on the vagina for yeast infections and trichomoniasis. The root can be infused in oil and used as a salve for slow-healing wounds. Its bitterness also makes for an excellent bitters tonic and digestive stimulant. While not interchangeable, yellowroot can be used in place of goldenseal.

MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS

YELLOWROOT TINCTURE

1:2, 95%: fresh roots
1:5, 60%: dried roots

See pages 26–33 for instructions on making tinctures. Take 1 dropperful two to three times a day for no longer than ten days continuously.

YELLOWROOT DECOCTION

This is very bitter, so adding other tasty herbs like mint or some honey can be helpful in making it more palatable. It is also a dye plant and will dye your clothes and fabrics yellow, so be careful!

2 teaspoons dried yellowroot roots and stems
3 cups water

Place the yellowroot in a medium saucepan and add the water. Put the saucepan over medium-low heat and bring to a simmer. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 20 minutes.

Allow the decoction to cool somewhat, then pour through a fine-mesh strainer into a 1-quart glass canning jar. Store any excess in the fridge up to 3 days.

Drink ½ cup of the decoction three times per day.

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1 Paul B. Hamel and Mary U. Chiltoskey, *Cherokee Plants and Their Uses: A 400 Year History* (Herald Publishing, 1975), 60.

2 Herbert C. Covey, *African American Slave Medicine* (Lexington Books, 2007), 117.

FINAL REMARKS

Herbal medicine is for everyone. We all come from long lineages of people who healed with plants. It is my hope you found some inspiration in these pages and that this will be one of many resources you turn to on the winding road toward safely and confidently making medicine with plants. It can feel overwhelming, recognizing how much there is to know and how much more we are learning all the time. While it is wonderful to stay abreast of the most current herbal research and writing, I hope you find comfort in knowing you do not need a degree to be a competent herbalist. Herbalism is the medicine of the people, and it is my deepest desire that it continues to be centered on serving our communities and families in an effort to revitalize and continue the subtle art and magic of this beautiful healing way.

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More from the Author

Wild Witchcraft

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Rebecca Beyer is the woman behind the Blood and Spicebush School of Old Craft. She lives in the mountains of western North Carolina, where she manages a homestead and teaches traditional witchcraft, foraging, and Appalachian folk medicine. She has a bachelor of science degree in plant and soil science from the University of Vermont and a master's degree in Appalachian studies and sustainability, concentrating in Appalachian ethnobotany, from Appalachian State University. She is also a member of the Association of Foragers. She spends her days trying to learn what her ancestors knew and finding ways to share traditional skills while also tackling cultural appropriation and the complexities of living in the modern world.

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